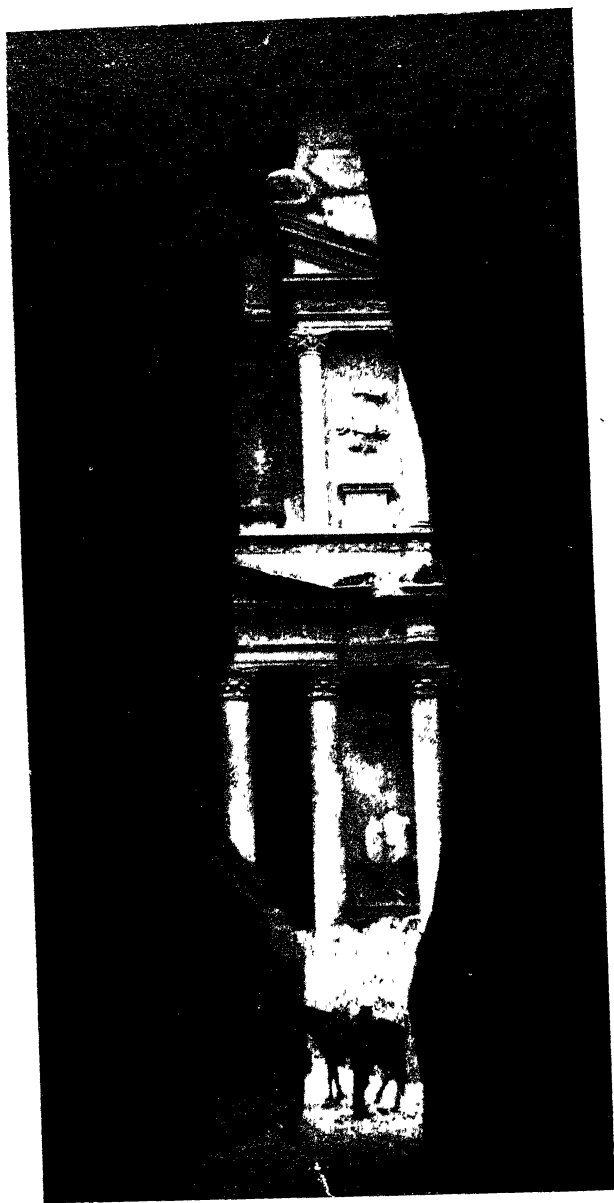


TRANS-JORDAN



THE KHAZNE FUR'UN FROM THE SIQ.

TRANS-JORDAN

SOME IMPRESSIONS BY
MRS. STEUART ERSKINE

With an Introduction by the

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INTRODUCTION

TRAVELLERS who give their impressions to the public after a visit to a little-known country often either obtrude their own personalities and expatiate at a wearisome length on the difficulties they experienced in connection with food and servants, or fill their books with a mass of inaccurate facts and statistics as to trade and population.

Mrs. Steuart Erskine has avoided both these pitfalls, and has produced what seems to me, who spent over two years in the country, a very readable book, containing much interesting historical information, and calculated to give the reader a good general idea of the present condition of the country.

I could wish that she had been able to see more of Ajlun, with its numerous villages picturesquely situated among olive groves or woods of evergreen oak, and to visit Tafila, the scenery round which I thought the grandest in the country.

What the country needs is a strong and enlightened government. That it certainly has not got at present, and the enthusiasm of the inhabitants for King Hussein was chiefly due to the hope that his visit might lead to an improvement in their condition.

Unfortunately, however, the only result was that the cost of entertaining him and his numerous followers imposed a heavy charge on the country, and served to increase the already almost intolerable exactions of the Emir Abdalla.

RAGLAN.

September, 1924.

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CHAPTER I

THE MOUNTAINS OF MOAB

STANDING on the Mount of Olives and looking eastward over the plain and the volcanic hills this side of the Jordan valley, the eye is arrested by a long range of intensely blue mountains that rise as a barrier on the farther side of the Dead Sea.

There are days when these hills disappear, days when they take on a leaden hue, but they generally present a uniform surface of pure, untranslatable blue by day, and of pale pink grained with amethyst at sundown.

During the few weeks that I spent in Jerusalem before going to Trans-Jordan I fell, like so many others, under the spell of the Moab hills. I felt their lure; they seemed to call me. Even if I had not come to Palestine with the intention of visiting the land beyond Jordan, I should have longed to go over there. The sight of the long level barrier beyond the intenser turquoise of the salt sea suggested all sorts of visions. I wanted to explore a land that has a history that is so new and yet so very old.

The morning of the 7th of March, 1924, I was waiting in the garden of the Austrian Hospice in Jerusalem for the car that was to take me to Salt, the first stage in my journey. The morning was bright with a blue sky across which clouds scudded before a fresh wind. I looked at the mass of almost colourless brick buildings that mount up to the dome and the chained cross of

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the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and watched the rays of the sun gradually light up the scene, defining the sharp angles of the square houses with their flat roofs, gilding the occasional little domes, giving variety to what is, at midday, a mass of neutral-tinted masonry. But although the sun gave life it could not take away from the sensation of secrecy that was one of the strongest impressions given me by Jerusalem. The people in the "Suks" and streets buy and sell, quarrel and make it up again, eat, drink, and smoke their narghillies in the sunshine of open spaces or in the shadow of covered passages. It is a life passed in common. But the town is made up of silence and secrecy. The small windows, so carefully latticed against the gaze of the curious, defy inspection; the monotonous colour of the outer walls seems purposely inconspicuous.

"What do you know of me?" the wonderful old city seemed to say. "You are inside my walls and outside my real life. . . ."

I was wondering whether the land for which I was bound would prove as elusive when the car, which arrived an hour late, appeared on the scene. The chauffeur, a wild, erratic-looking individual, who spoke no English or French and only a few words of German, stowed my possessions in the back of the car and I took my place in front. We rattled up the Via Dolorosa, passed the walls that stand over the site of Pilate's Judgment Hall (is one ever far from following the footsteps of Christ in Jerusalem?) and left by the Gate that the Arabs call the Gate of Our Lady Mary, but that is more usually known as Saint Stephen's Gate, because it was near here that he was martyred. Outside the walls we stopped to take in petrol.

THE MOUNTAINS OF MOAB

Two women passed, carrying heavy weights on their heads with the air of captive princesses; one of them had a basket containing a huge pyramid of cauliflowers, the other a great square petrol tin—alas for the modern note!—full of water. A small boy came and gazed at the car with interest; he was leading a sheep with a piebald face and carried a branch of apple-blossom. The chauffeur filled up his tank, started the engine, and away we sped.

We went by the Mount of Olives, past Bethany, and so into the open country, winding in and out of valleys, running down and down among the hills that enfold them. The road, which is a very good one, curled in front of us like a white ribbon.

There is always something exhilarating in taking the first steps on a journey, especially in an unknown country where there are certain elements of difficulty. I had been told that the difficulties of travelling in Trans-Jordan were great; unlike Palestine, where there is nearly always a lodging to be found in the hospice of some convent, you must either provide yourself with a caravan, or trust to the hospitality of the Governor of a town, or seek it in the tent of a desert Sheikh. With the best intentions, some people had tried to discourage me from the attempt to travel, as an ordinary tourist, in a country that has not yet been opened up. But, so far, I had been lucky. The Matron of the Church Missionary Society's hospital at Salt had promised to take me in, and—a great stroke of luck this—I had been invited to join the party to Petra organised by Peake Pasha for Sir Ronald Storrs.

Added to the uncertainty of getting a bed for the night in eastern Palestine is the problem of calculating

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how much money you may require during your stay, there being no banks where you can change a cheque or cash a letter of credit. It is necessary to take whatever you may want with you in cash; on the other hand it is not always wise to carry ready-money. Only two days before I motored to Salt a car had been stopped between Jericho and that town by highwaymen, and the occupants had been robbed of forty pounds. It was a most unusual event, so I was told, but it lent a colour of romance to my journey, especially as the "gentlemen of the road" were said to belong to King Hussein's bodyguard, he being in camp at Shunet Nimrin not two miles distant.

To journey from Jerusalem, some 2,600 feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea, to Jericho, which is 820 feet below it, is to pass from one climate to another. As we went lower and lower between the queer-shaped volcanic hills and came out into the Jordan valley, the change of temperature was quite noticeable. The valley was a mass of flowers, a vision of blue and gold; Jericho lay in a nest of verdure. We arrived at the Jordan and crossed the Allenby Bridge. Whatever meditations I might have indulged in when I first caught a glimpse of the famous river were cut short by a violent altercation between my chauffeur and the men who guard the farther side. What was it all about? My Arabic was, unfortunately, very sketchy, a fact I regretted constantly. Thinking that we were not going to be allowed to pass over, I produced my passport, which contained a visa for Trans-Jordan, obtained from an agent in the Jaffa Road. I had been told that I must pay ten shillings for this privilege of visiting each town east of Jordan and five pounds for Petra. Making a virtue of necessity, I paid the lesser



JERUSALEM: STREET SCENE.

THE MOUNTAINS OF MOAB

sum for the visit to Salt and trusted to luck for the rest. Not only was I never asked for further payments, but the police at the bridge were completely mystified when I showed my passport to them. They all looked at it, shrugged their shoulders, and even showed it to a man who was passing through in a car. It seemed to amuse them very much, and I can only conclude that this very injudicious tax, calculated to keep tourists out of the country, was remitted as soon as it was put on.

After this little comedy had been played, one of the men asked me if I would take a policeman in the car to Salt, and it appeared that this was the cause of all the discussion. I assented willingly, he jumped in among the baggage, and we started once more.

At last I found myself in the land beyond Jordan. My first impression was of a mass of flowers, my second, of a spacious landscape opening out into fertile valleys, winding among hills that get grander in outline and bulk as you climb upwards towards the cornice road, which rivals in picturesqueness many well-known beauty spots in Europe. And everywhere there were rocks. The little huts or houses had their back wall in the mountain, standing on ledges, one over another. The Arabs squatted on the ground in front of their open doors, or followed their flocks along the road or across the open country. They were finer men than the Palestinians, heavily bearded, clothed as Abraham must have dressed, in a white robe and the picturesque headdress of the Arab, the white or coloured "kufiya" kept in place by a double ring of black goat's hair.

As the first novelty wore off I began to plan out my future movements. Salt was the most civilised town in

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Trans-Jordan, so I had been told; I had an introduction to a lady doctor in Amman who might take me in; Petra was arranged for. But how about the other places that I wanted to visit? I thought of the tour that I had mapped out in my mind, a tour that outstepped the limits of the new state, including much that appeared to be of great interest. Madeba, Kerak and Shobek might well come within the long journey to Petra; even a passing glimpse might be then obtained of the sad remains of the great Persian palace of M'shita, of the lions at Arak-el-Emir, or of the hot springs of Callirrhoe, where Herod went to ease his incurable complaint. The three rivers so often written about in ancient history must be visited, of course—the Yarmuk, the Jabbok, and the Arnon; the Dead Sea also. And then there was the Hauran with its ruins of basaltic temples and its Nabataean inscriptions, the Greek cities of the Decapolis, including the famous Jerash, Dera'a with its underground city, Mukeis with its tombs and its ruined splendour, Bosra, where Mohammed learned about Christianity, Banyas, where are the sources of the Jordan and where there is an altar to Pan, who must surely be the patron saint of all the impudent little black goats dispersed over Palestine. I don't know how much farther I should have got on the road to Damascus if the train of my vagrant thought had not been interrupted by an explosion which caused the chauffeur to produce his one word of English: "Puncture!"

After the tyre had been repaired we went on again, climbing up to 2,740 feet above sea-level; skirting the mountains on the cornice road, looking down on to gorges with the rocky beds of waterless streams hundreds of feet below. Then we came to a fertile

THE MOUNTAINS OF MOAB

valley with a stream running along, which had been partly diverted to turn several mills, from which the water spouted out gaily. We rounded the projecting shoulder of a hill and saw a city rising up and up over two hills, divided from each other by a valley.

The chauffeur pointed to it triumphantly.

“Es-Salt!” he said.

CHAPTER II

ES-SALT

ES-SALT, or Salt as it is commonly called, is the most imposing town in Trans-Jordan, in spite of the promotion of Amman to be the capital of the new state. Built of stone, the houses rise up tier on tier on the steep slope of two hills, the shops and Suk lying in the valley between them.

Although Salt has its traditions, it is a comparatively new town, having been added to within the last century, when trade with Damascus brought prosperity, and when the product of the fields obtained good prices on the west of Jordan. As to its ancient history, it has been identified by some authorities with Gadara; it was the seat of an early Christian bishopric, and it possesses the ruins of a fort that has Roman foundations, was rebuilt by the Crusaders, destroyed by the Mongols in 1260, rebuilt again by Sultan Beybars in 1266. Although in a partly ruined state it appears to have provided a home for the poor Saltese until Ibrahim Pasha took it by assault in 1840. Among the mass of stones at the summit of the hill, where once the fortress stood, some interesting specimens of pottery have been found.

The town was noted, before the Hidjaz railway was laid, as a meeting-place for pilgrims journeying from different parts of the Moslem world to Mecca. The two valleys down which the principal stream of pilgrims came still keep names reminiscent of those days—the Wadi 'l Akrad and the Wadi Haleb (the Valley of the Kurds and the Valley of Aleppo).

The English C.M.S. Hospital stands on the southern slope of the Castle hill; it is a substantial building with



ES-SALT: A TYPICAL STAIRWAY.

ES-SALT

airy wards and large outer balconies, or terraces. In the compound below is the little church, the boys' and girls' schools, and the dispensary for out-patients. To the right of the hospital, built on a ledge of rock, are some bedrooms, lately added, and the Matron's sitting-room. The window and door of my room opened out on to this ledge of rock, from which I had a most picturesque view of the valley below and the town stretching up the hill beyond. From this coign of vantage much of the life of the townspeople could be seen, and I found it an excellent point of departure for my vagrant studies of the land beyond Jordan.

Down in the valley, a little to the right, is the Serai, or Government building, with its projecting wings and its ugly tin roof; up and down the outer staircase the Arabs hung about, waiting for an interview, perhaps, with the authorities within. Then there are the houses on the lower strata, which are solidly built and have larger windows than are usual in the East, of which many have balconies. Some of the roofs are flat, and on them you will see the women sitting or working; some have grass-grown domes. The hill teems with life. Figures clad in black or white run about on the different levels or climb the curved stairway that lies to the left, just on the brow of the hill. The farther up the hill you look, the simpler and more like rock dwellings become the houses, and the sides of the parapets are covered with grass. Right up at the top, on the extreme right, is the Mahommedan graveyard; the tombs with their upright posts for the angels at the the head and foot are silhouetted against the sky. I can only remember one of these tombs which had a long-handled spoon engraved on it, used in making coffee; it was designed to celebrate the dead man's hospitality.

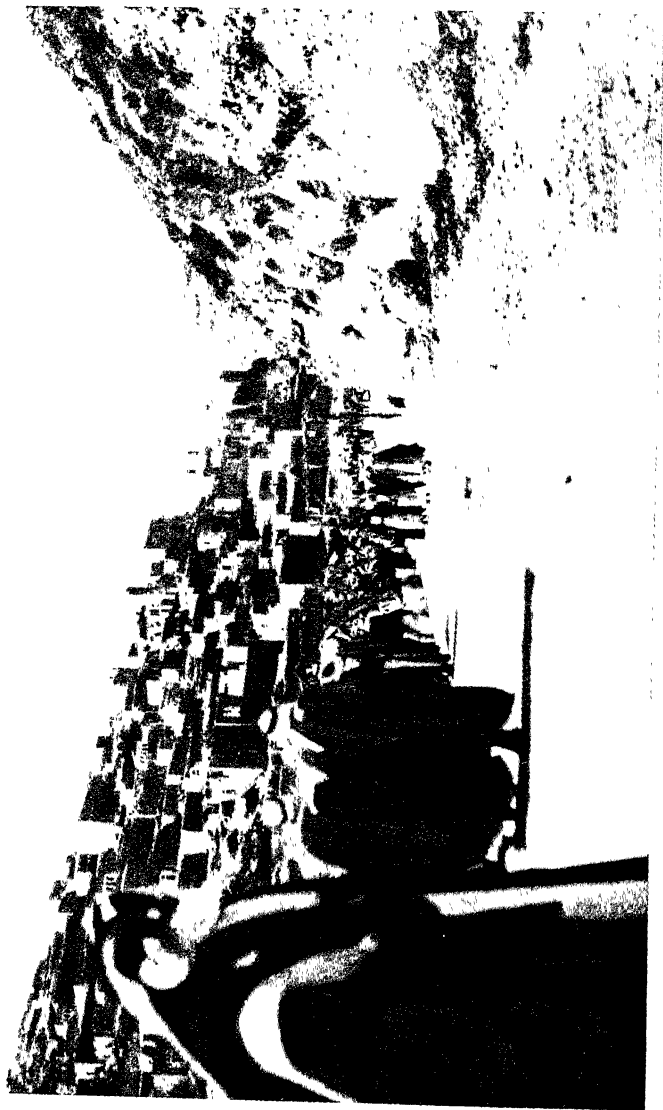
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Salt has quite a large Christian population and possesses churches belonging to the Latin, the Greek Orthodox and the Greek Catholic communities, as well as the all too modest Anglican chapel, built on the foundations of a Roman bath, which is too small for the congregation. There are also two mosques, the older of which stands just below the rocky ledge outside my bedroom window, than which the top of the minaret is not much higher. It is an unpretentious little minaret, with a canopy that was partly broken down by a heavy snowfall last winter; in and out of the roof of what remains of this canopy, which is crowned by a crescent, the sparrows hop and twitter. It is so close to the hospital that a former Muadhdhin, who happened to be also a baker, once ended his call to prayer by leaning from his balcony and addressing these words to the Matron, who was also out at an early hour:

“ Sister ! How many loaves do you want for the hospital to-day ? ”

Who can say that the members of the various religions of the world cannot live together in peace and neighbourliness if they will only try ?

In the middle of the town is a spring in an enclosed roofed-in space, and here you may see the women who come not only to fetch the water from the spring, but to bathe their feet in the running water. Many of the younger women and girls are pretty, but the disfiguring practice of tattooing the face, and even the lips, is a handicap. The most usual type of Arab or Bedawin womanhood has a full oval face with a straight nose, good dark eyes and dark hair which is sometimes dyed with henna. Their dress is, I believe, peculiar to Salt in shape and, to some extent, in decoration. It consists of a skirt of a peculiar shade of dark blue,



WAITING FOR KING HUSSEIN ON THE ROAD TO AMMAN

ES-SALT

which has cross bands of black stuff adorned with coloured stitching; over this they wear the inevitable black robe, its special feature being that it is so long that it is worn turned back to the waist, while the sleeves are so long that they form a hood when the centre part to which they are joined is thrown back over the head. The women make this dress themselves, sitting at their task for a couple of weeks or more until it is completed, usually sewing the seams on both sides with coloured silk.

Any one walking through the town and seeing these women sitting about in front of their rock dwellings, or up on the roof, would think them idle, but they manage to do a good deal of work. They fetch the wood and the water, bake the large, flat rounds of bread, often grind the corn in quaint prehistoric hand mills; they also make baskets and weave the rugs that are one of the local industries. In the house of some fellaheen, just above the hospital, I saw the typical living-room raised above the ground at the entrance by a sort of stage, under which was a stable for the animals. In the walls of this room were openings into great bins in which corn was stored; at the back were the mattresses and quilts that were spread on the floor at night to serve as beds for the family. In front of this primitive dwelling sat the mother and a very young baby with the grandmother, some other women, three or four children and the inevitable Pi dog. The whole family greeted my companion, the head mistress of the girls' school, with evident affection. Earlier in the day we had visited a better-class house in which I had been kindly received by a mother and two daughters in the typical room with a divan that Arabs keep for their guests. The floor was tiled, the walls were white-

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washed, two recesses were piled up with rugs and carpets that were used when friends came to stay. After drinking coffee out of tiny yellow cups we inspected the lace and crochet work executed by the girls and some of the rugs, but these were shown without enthusiasm. They had fled from Salt, like all the Christians and many Moslems, when the Turks reoccupied the town during the late war, leaving all their possessions. When they returned they found everything gone and the things that they had been able to buy since were not worth a quarter of those they had lost. Before the war! . . . I was to hear this same story many times before I left Salt.

I stayed for ten days at Salt and enjoyed every minute of the time, not making many expeditions as I was anxious to know something of life in a native town. But there are two that are almost inevitable, a walk up to the Jebel Osha and a motor drive or ride to the Wady Shaib. To go to the latter you return down the road to Jericho, passing by a small ruin of an early Christian church known as the Kenissa Sara, locally supposed to have been built by a wicked Egyptian princess in expiation of her past sins; on the other side of the road are many caves and rock tombs. Arrived at the Wady Shaib, where a bridge spans the river, you walk up to the tomb that the guides give to Jephtha, but which the Arabs venerate as the last resting-place of the prophet Elisha.

I went to the tomb of the Nebi Shaib with the Matron of the hospital, Miss Fisher, known and respected in the neighbourhood as Sister Norah. The day was hot and the flowers were just beginning to appear in profusion. On the way we had admired a whole field of deep, dark blue lupin, which is here used for fodder;



ES-SALT

ES-SALT

in the fields we found it again with masses of white, sweet-scented broom and the blood red anemones that are now said to be the "lilies of the field" to which Solomon "in all his glory" could not be compared.

The tomb of the prophet consists of a very long open trough surrounded by a wall of loose stones, in the crannies of which the shepherds have stuck their crooks when registering a vow; at the opening is a dolmen on which sacrifices are still made on great occasions, and the usual rags and odds and ends of votive offerings are to be seen. The Arabs still sacrifice a sheep here and register vows before a witness; the penalty for false oaths is said to be death within the year. This custom is still in force on Mount Carmel, in the cave where the prophet Elijah lived, though the sacrifice is not permitted. On one occasion two Arabs went to this shrine to settle a point of honour. One man agreed to swear to something that both knew to be untrue; he stood before the altar with a lighted candle in either hand and made the usual declaration. It was something like this: "If what I have sworn is not true, may I, my wife and my children, die within the year." He blew out the candles, honour was satisfied; but the story goes that his wife, a young and healthy woman, died within the year.

We picnicked here under a spreading but still leafless tree; the view was extensive, embracing the nearer hills of Gilead and the farther Judæan hills the other side of Jordan, the tower on the top of the Mount of Olives being faintly discernible. As we were sitting there a shepherd and a lad came up, visited the tomb and came to rest under the tree. The man was a fine figure with a thick black beard, the youth one of those rather beautiful, sensitive types you see often in the

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remote regions. They looked good subjects for the camera, so I produced one of my few Arabic sentences:

“ Would you like to be photographed ? ”

Unlike most Arabs, whether Moslem or Christian, the Shepherd did not wish to be photographed, and the reason he gave had nothing to do with his religious scruples.

“ No, no. I have not got on my trousers ! ”

As his long white tob reached his ankles, the loss would hardly have been perceived, but he repeated the phrase several times and shook his head with decision. As his scruples had nothing to do with the supposed Moslem dislike of reproducing human nature, I took a chance snap at a discreet distance. I may say that I suffered more from the people who wished to be immortalised than from those who had a natural antipathy to that penance. They were only too keen to pose and a great deal too keen to change their becoming garments for something European.

Sister Norah and her ward attendant, who had accompanied us, now entered into conversation with the men. The elder said that his son had been in the hospital. He admitted that he often heard Christians spoken of as infidels, but added that he always stood up for them because of the good treatment that his son had had. A religious discussion ensued that I was unable to follow, but I was told that the shepherd and Sister Norah's Arab attendant started with the Flood and came gradually down to the present day. Both spoke with natural eloquence and to both the subject was one of intense and vital interest. They parted on the best of terms, and the men, who were walking to Jericho, went their way and we went ours.

A visit to Salt would be quite incomplete without



ES-SALT FROM THE AMMAN ROAD

ES-SALT

walking up to the Jebel Osha, where is the tomb of the prophet Hosea; but the real culminating point of that walk is when you get to the highest point of the whole range of the mountains of Gilead, to that spot which is now supposed to be the actual place where Moses looked at the Promised Land which he was not to enter. The summit of this hill is actually higher than that of Mount Nebo; the view is more extensive. You come on it quite unexpectedly, after a long but gradual ascent from the town; when you first see it, the strange, weird beauty of it quite takes away your breath.

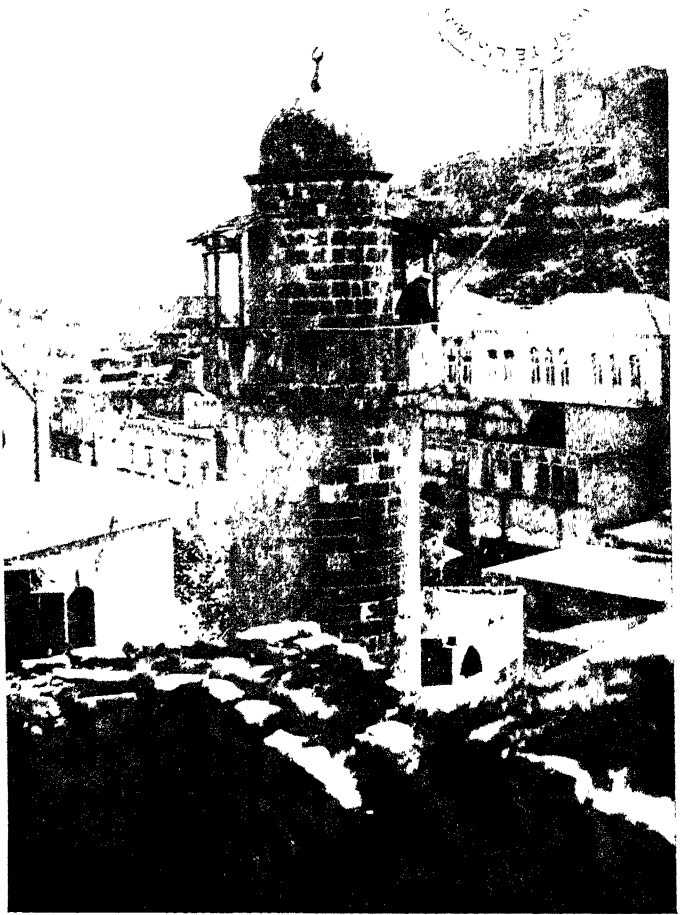
Looking down over the sharp descent of the mountain you see a wide valley in which a river wanders with yellow soil and flowery margin, with unaccountable streaks of peacock blue and pale green, and ground thickly starred with white daisies, all harmonised by the atmosphere. It is, of course, the Jordan, running in that curiously deep bed that the Arabs call the Rift. From no other place can you realise it so well. Far to the north you see the snowfield on the summit of Mount Hermon and can just discern the opening of the valley of Esdraelon, which stretches out to Mount Carmel and the sea. To the south lies the Dead Sea, into which the Jordan and the Arnon are received; opposite are the hills of Samaria, among which are prominent the hills of blessing and cursing, Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, between which lies Nablus. It is a wonderful view, whichever way you look, not only for its beauty, but for its associations. Up to the north the oldest caravan route in the world wound its way from the Euphrates by Damascus, Galilee, the plain of Esdraelon, the Maritime Plain, and Gaza to the Nile; on Esdraelon the Egyptians and

TRANS-JORDAN

Assyrians fought many a bloody battle, and historic contests took place right up to recent times, when the British encamped there after taking Akka by assault. Before you the Jordan lies, the Down-runner, as the Arabs call it, because of its rapid course downhill for so many miles—the Jordan in the waters of which Christ was baptised. To the right the Dead Sea lies, a pool of turquoise blue. One wonders if the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah are still embedded in the bituminous bottom of the salt lake.

Geologists attribute the extraordinary depth of the Rift to a fault in the earth's crust; they tell us that the whole region was once covered with water above which only the granite peaks of Sinai appeared. A great convulsion threw up the long ridges of limestone which now form the mountains on either side. Whatever the explanation, the effect is rather unearthly. Sometimes the Jordan banks are unhealthy swamps, a tangle of tamarisk and semi-tropical vegetation; in these places the climate is like a forcing-house. At other points there is arable land and the climate, although hot, has not the same dangerous quality.

I left this vast panoramic view with regret. Before we went I was shown the emplacement for a Turkish machine gun, which brought me back to the present day again. We went down through fields that will be covered with vine later on, by trees a mass of almond blossom, standing in a carpet of blue speedwell, and by banks glowing with red anemone, mauve orchids and iris, cyclamen and the taller lupin and asphodel. Some women carrying great black jars met us going to a spring that had just gushed out. It was life in its most peaceful, pastoral aspect.



ES-SALT THE MINARET WITH THE MUADHDHIN.

CHAPTER III

THE CHANGING EAST

IN its outward appearance Palestine gives the impression of changeless immobility. The hand of time seems to have stopped some millennia ago. People talk of the "unchanging East," until the words take on some of the meaningless tang of the well-worn cliché. And yet, there is the Bedawi living in his tent of hair in just the same conditions that obtained when his ancestors raided the country hundreds of years ago; the shepherd standing motionless among his flocks must surely think the same thoughts that slowly presented themselves to his predecessors; the women going to the well with their great black pitchers poised on their heads might be taken for their prototypes in the days of Rachel. Even the camels, supercilious and soft-footed, marching in single file under the charge of some wild-eyed boy, have an air of performing an age-old rite. Is the East, that has witnessed more changes than can be dismissed in a paragraph, changeless, or is it that this pastoral life takes something from the soil and from life in the simplest conditions and, even so, is more unchanging in outer appearance than in inner significance? However that may be, no one can travel in this land, with its history coming out of the mists four thousand years ago, without being struck by the immobility of pastoral life and the drastic changes that must have altered the whole state of existence as successive civilisations swept over the land. You can't shut your eyes to the past when you wander about east of Jordan. It may be a Roman inscription seen on one of those great military roads which that enterprising people flung across the desert,

TRANS-JORDAN

or a stronghold of the Crusaders, or perhaps the fragment of a Greek temple; milestones, all of them, on the highway of Palestinian history. It is impossible to shut your eyes to these things, and really difficult to avoid falling into the pitfall of trying to reconstruct the elusive past. But the most ancient history is still in the making; the remote past yields up its jealously kept secrets grudgingly, little by little.

What do we know of the history of the land that is now called Trans-Jordan? A good deal that is fragmentary, gleaned from half-obliterated inscriptions and from the labours of the archæologist; bits from the Bible, from the Tell-el-Amarna letters, from the bombastic rhetoric of the Moabite Stone, from the pages of Josephus. A good deal is misty, but on some events connected with the land beyond a sudden, dramatic light is thrown.

The strip of land lying between the Mediterranean sea and the Arabian desert has been called the bridge between Africa and Asia. Across its stony plains and its fertile valleys the nations of the north and south have fought, making it the cockpit of the Near East. A land of tribes, it has hardly ever risen to be a self-governing state and it has been conquered by one nation after another. If the hordes of uncivilised peoples that have raided it at various times have had no abiding influence on the lives of the bridge people, the great nations must have imposed their seal. Egypt ruled for centuries by means of tributary princes, taking from Syria certain religious symbols, giving in exchange influences which can be traced to-day in architecture; the two sister states of Babylon and Assyria, the nations that typify the merchant and the soldier, brought culture from the land of great man-headed lions, of mystic



ES-SALT : ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARABS'
INDEPENDENCE.

THE CHANGING EAST

astral theology; the Persian influence is strong in poetry and architecture, Greece and Rome set their seal on the country, their social customs and their art must have brought great changes in the land during the time of their supremacy. If Greece merely colonised certain parts, creating a guild of cities held together by her laws, built according to her ideals, her culture was enforced by the Romans. And, after all, Palestine was a Roman province for the first six hundred years of our era. The second Persian conquest was, of course, followed by the Moslem rule, which left the Turks the masters until the late war shook the kaleidoscope once more.

Western Palestine is probably more the heir of the past than is the wilder region east of Jordan, although there are more remains of that past in the eastern area. Dolmens, showing that the land was inhabited by a Megalithic people, abound here, reminding us of the age-long history of its inhabitants, millennia before Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees to take possession of the country owned by the Amorites or Canaanites.

It was apparently chance that took Abraham west of Jordan. He was a very rich man, owning a vast quantity of cattle; when his herdsmen quarrelled with those of his nephew Lot, he offered the latter whatever land he preferred, as there was not room for them both in the same place. Lot, who evidently liked a town life, chose the rich Jordan valley and settled himself near Sodom, while Abraham passed over to Hebron. A thousand years later Moses took a census of the tribes in the plain of Moab. He portioned out the promised land here, and the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manassah obtained the rich grazing

TRANS-JORDAN

land of Gilead and part of Bashan because they had "much cattle." Moses gave them the kingdoms of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and of Og, King of Bashan.

Over all this rich tract of history the Arab east of Jordan lives in apparently complete indifference, stabling his cattle among the ruined walls of a Roman fort or a Persian palace or an early Christian basilica, as forgetful of buried grandeur as are the flowers and creeping plants that half hide them from our view. I say apparently, because appearances are liable to be deceptive. The modern Arab, whether of fellaheen or Bedawin stock, is a more complex being than people are apt to think, proof of which can be adduced from the fact that those who have lived here longest differ in their estimate of his character.

The Arab will tell you that he is of Semitic blood, a decendant of Shem, the son of Noah, and consequently a remote cousin of the Jews; that the Bedawin descend from Hagar's son Ishmael; but the fellaheen are possibly the descendants of the pre-Semitic inhabitants of the land. Although the fellaheen and Bedawin have much in common, they have a natural enmity which breaks out whenever one of the great predatory tribes carries out a raid on the property of the settled part of the community. This element of uncertainty is one which ought to be put down with a strong hand instead of being tolerated as it is under the present régime.

The Arabs, as a general rule, seem to have accepted the British mandate with enthusiasm. England stood with them for justice and fair play; they were thankful to be quit of the Turks. They were, however, a good deal mystified when they realised that we were not

THE CHANGING EAST

going to govern the country that we had conquered by force of arms. They were puzzled. "The English are curious people," an Arab is reported to have said. "They have made three states out of this country and have given them three rulers. But what would you have? They have even divided God into three parts!"

It was not only the portioning out the land under the rule of the then Sherif of Mecca and his sons that surprised the Arab, awaking slowly to the idea of Arab independence, it was the manner in which we occupied and evacuated portions of his country. Salt, especially, suffered from this procedure, and the Saltese are bitter about it to this day. The true facts of the case appear in Lord Allenby's Despatches.

In 1917, General Allenby commanded the Egyptian Expeditionary Force which was sent to carry out offensive operations in Palestine. The Turks and Germans held strong positions, the difficulties of transport and of obtaining water were great; in spite of these difficulties the successful autumn campaign took place, culminating in the taking of Jerusalem and the formal entry of our troops into the Holy City on December 11th. The enemy's forces were now cut in two, and General Allenby decided to cross the Jordan with a view of interrupting his communications with the Hidjaz, and of co-operating with the Arab troops under the command of the Sherif Feisal, based on Akaba.

This raid was carried out in the face of tremendous odds. The Jordan was in flood, its swift current added to its increased volume making the crossing of the troops a matter of some difficulty. The rainy season had set in and the mud and sand of the tracks made the transport of heavy guns slow and arduous,

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but Jericho was taken and the valley of the Jordan sufficiently cleared of the enemy to allow an advance to be made on Salt, which was occupied on March 25th, 1918. From Salt a raid was carried out on Amman with the object of destroying part of the railway near that town. The object was achieved, but our forces were unable to hold the town, the enemy being in a strong position on the hills round about.

The result of these operations was that the Turks rushed up reinforcements, leaving the Arabs in the south free to attack in that area; they were now in considerable force, stiffened by a battalion of German infantry. The rain continued, making further attacks unwise, and our troops re-crossed the Jordan, having inflicted great losses on the enemy besides the damage done to the railway, and having helped a number of Armenians to escape.

On April 30th Es-Salt was taken again and an Australian Brigade left to watch the left flank of the troops. The great Beni Sakhr tribe, encamped near Madeba, now sent a deputation to the British with an offer to co-operate with them provided the attack took place before May 4th, by which time their supplies would be exhausted and the tribe would be forced to disperse. The offer was accepted, a combined movement was arranged to take place on May 2nd, partly with the object of saving the harvest from the Turks, and with the intention of leaving the Beni Sakhr tribe to garrison Salt when the Australians were withdrawn. The Beni Sakhr, however, failed to fulfil the promise made, and the result was that Salt had once more to be evacuated. This time only half an hour's warning could be given to the Christian population and those Moslems who had helped our forces by keeping the

THE CHANGING EAST

lines of communication and had identified themselves, in various ways, with the cause of the Allies.

It was night and torrential rain was falling when this bad news was flung, like a bomb-shell, on the horrified people. To wait for the Turks was impossible, to fly was a nightmare. But fly they did, leaving their lamps burning and their bread in the ovens and all their possessions ready for the enemy to loot. Women carrying babies, old people struggling along with the help of the young, men taking with them the few odds and ends that could be carried, they managed, many of them, to walk as far as Jericho, twenty-eight miles, in the dark. There they were picked up by lorries and taken on to Jerusalem, where they were fed and clothed and housed in tents until the Armistice. Before that event stopped the Allies in their victorious career, Salt had been once more occupied, Amman was taken on September 25th and Damascus on October 1st. The Fourth Turkish Army had been completely destroyed.

When the Saltese returned to their homes they found that the Turks and Germans had not only looted all their possessions, they had even taken away all the wood used in the houses, including the roofs, door-posts and window fittings. The town was in a desperate condition, thronged with idle men. The fields were lying fallow, but there were no ploughs or tools and the blacksmiths had no metal to make new ones. It was then that the American Red Cross came for a brief stay, during which they did a fine work of re-construction, aided by the English missionary settlement, which was then left in sole charge of the interests of all the Christians in Salt, besides that of many Moslems who had attended their schools.

TRANS-JORDAN

The time has passed when the work of missionaries is spoken of with contempt; the war made it plainly evident what excellent effect their teachings have had in all sorts of outposts of civilisation. The English C.M.S. were the earliest to come to Salt, and their hospital is the only one—to quote from “Palestine and its Future,” by the Rev. W. Wilson Cash—“in a stretch of about 1,000 miles from Damascus in the north to Aden in the south.” It is a pity that the Italians are about to fit up another hospital here, when there is such urgent need for one in so many places where medical aid would be an inestimable blessing.

In the year 1900 a small hospital was set up at Akka; after five years it was removed bodily on sixty camels to Salt, where a mission house and a tiny church were already in use. When the war broke out the Matron, Miss Fisher, was away on leave in England, and it was some time before she could leave hospital work in London, and afterwards in Cairo, in order to return to Palestine. She came back to Salt with the American Red Cross to find that the hospital had been used as a base hospital for all the Turkish troops in the Jordan valley; the church had been used as a granary. The old Anglican priest, a Syrian, “Pastor Nicola,” who had been in Salt all through the troubles, managed to save the altar-cloth; but for this the church was bare. On the first Sunday seventeen members of the congregation stood for the service; little by little a few benches were collected, a table from a house evacuated by the Germans served as the altar, mats spun by the women, woven and dyed in Salt, were brought. A Mukari, who travelled back and forwards to Jerusalem with his mules, offered to present an olive-wood plate for the collection. He went to Jerusalem, but repented

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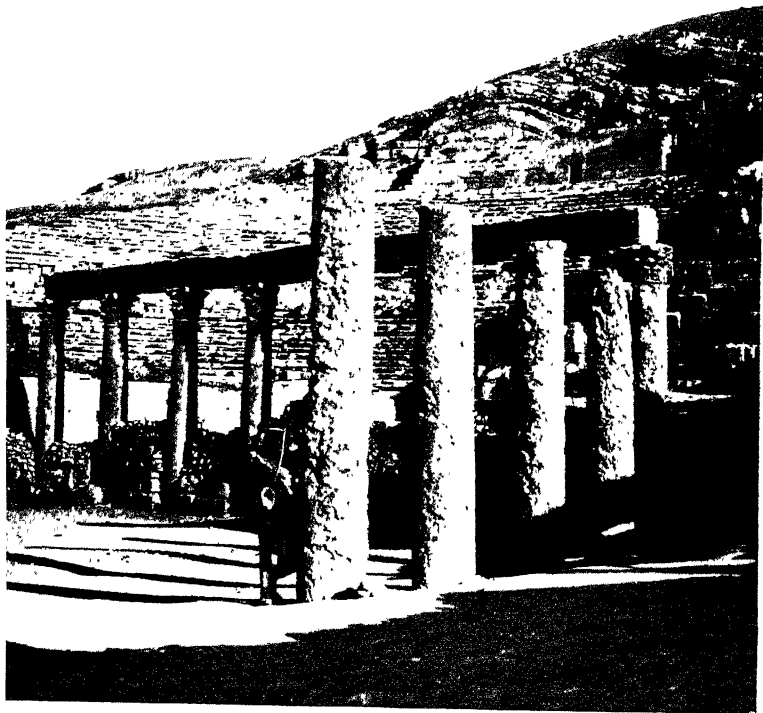
of his too generous offer; coming back without it, one of his mules was injured by a lorry. This the Mukari accepted as a judgment, and the very next time he went to the Holy City he bought the olive-wood plate and presented it to the church. The Communion plate was presented by Miss Fisher's brother, the head master of Repton; it was brought to Salt by Father Waggett, then serving in the army. Another gift came from a sympathiser who is, I think, a member of the Orthodox Greek Church; it consists of a symbolic drawing of the Sacramental Cup on a star.

The American Red Cross, after helping to stock the hospital and to provide wood and other necessities for the dismantled houses, were recalled suddenly to Damascus, leaving Miss Fisher the solitary representative of the mission and the only European in Salt. She spent Christmas Eve commandeering a bell that had been found and getting it hung in the church; it was rung on Christmas Day and was the first church bell to be rung there since the Turkish occupation. It turned out that it had been taken from the Orthodox Greek church, to which it was returned after being rung for our Easter Day, just in time to be rung for the Greek Easter. Bishop McInnis gave a new bell, which was hung in place of the one that disappeared in the war.

In the same way the hospital got stocked again. Although the necessary furniture had been procured, it was quite pleasant to receive the music stands of the German military band converted into tables and reading desks by the carpenter whom they had employed during the occupation; the troops, too, were always trying to find unconsidered trifles left by the enemy that might prove useful in the hospital.

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Little by little Salt returned to its normal state, and two events occurred while I was there which brought me face to face with the latest turn of the kaleidoscope. One of these was the celebration of the anniversary of Arab Independence; the other was the passing through the town of King Hussein of the Hidjaz. For this occasion all the shops were shut and a general holiday ordered. A triumphal arch was erected at the turn of the road just outside the town. The roads were lined with school children, the police and a detachment of the Arab Legion turned out. The roads and hillsides were alive with men, the roofs of distant houses black with the dresses of the women, with here and there bright-coloured garments of the more emancipated. For four solid hours after the scheduled time the crowd waited, and then, at long last, the royal car arrived and drew up at the arch, where presentations were made. The King, who looked very old and immensely wise, is a great favourite with the Trans-Jordans; he gave fifty pounds to the town and went his way to Amman, accompanied by the Emir Abdallah of Trans-Jordan and by his eldest son, the Emir Ali. Soon afterwards I left Salt.



AMMAN THE ROMAN THEATRE.

CHAPTER IV

THE CITY OF WATERS

THE capital of Trans-Jordan is a straggling village lying along two valleys, through one of which a pretty stream runs, the Nahr Amman, an upper reach of the Zerka, the Jabbok of the Bible. This stream at the time of my visit was shaded by poplars and willows as well as by masses of fruit trees just coming into blossom.

When I arrived at Amman it was crowded with the followers of King Hussein, who was just finishing a long visit to his son, the Emir Abdallah, the ruler of Trans-Jordan. The narrow streets, always crowded, were then alive with colour and humming with the sound of voices. In and out of the little shanties that line the road where once was the imposing street of columns, men pushed their way, stopping to have a word with a friend or to buy some of the oddly assorted articles hung out to tempt the passer-by. Saucepans and saddlebags, coffee-pots and boots, all sorts of appetising nut cakes baked in large flat dishes, and great baskets of oranges and lemons, they were displayed together in picturesque confusion.

In the centre of the town, where two roads meet, is a fountain near which the new mosque is being built; here, morning and evening, a crowd assembled. There would be men on horseback or riding mules or camels; shepherds with their flocks, boys in charge of goats, all talking at the top of their voices. A car comes along and the crowd, that has spread all over the roadway, divides to let it pass, swarming all over the road again directly it has passed.

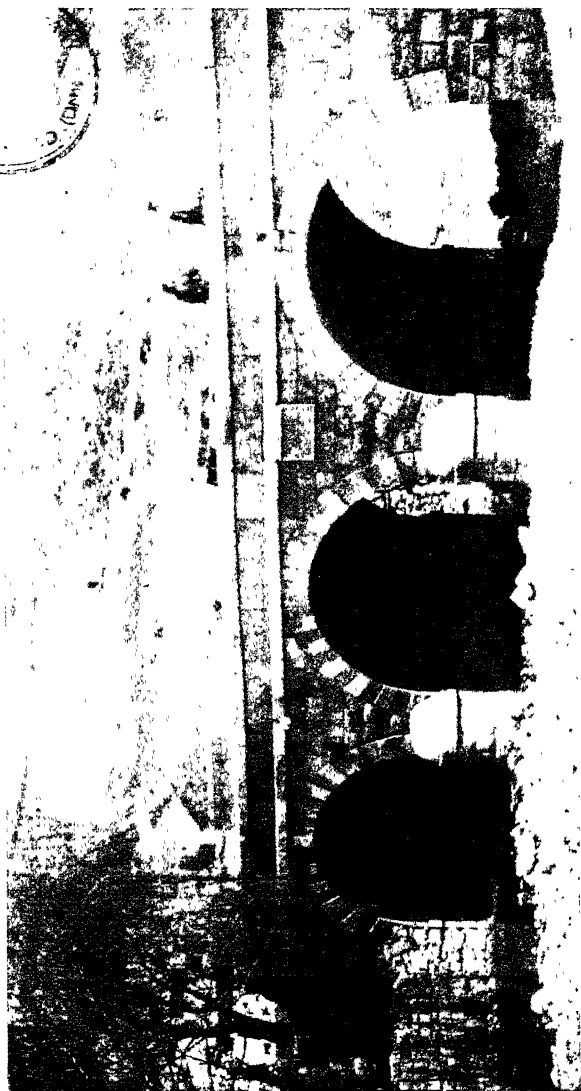
The crowd is always interesting; perhaps it is more

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gaudy than usual owing to the presence of the King and the Emir. Two men walking together make quite a picture; one wears a white abayah thickly shot with gold, the other has a black one with a gold embroidered collar and a dark kaffia embroidered in colour and gold. A tall negro stalks by clad in spotless white; he wears the cherry-coloured kaffia made popular by the Emir. An old man with flowing grey beard and hair has the head of a prophet of old; he walks slowly, leaning on a stick. Solemn round-eyed children sprawl in the dust, Mahommedan women, with black dress and inky black veil, trot along in smart shoes; Arab women, unveiled, with their faces tattooed in the lower part, trail their long black or dark blue robes after them. They carry heavy weights on their heads or babies on their shoulders or slung on to their backs. There are fellaheen with vegetables, and Bedawin with flocks; there are soldiers of the Arab Legion mounted on their small, sure-footed horses, and impish boys astride the inevitable donkey. And, as everywhere in Trans-Jordan, there are quantities of dogs, the descendants of the pariah breed, whose habit it is to bark loudly in chorus by night and day.

Looking back on the street scenes in Amman, it is chiefly the colour that leaves the deepest impression. Sun-stained reds and tawny orange, vivid tango and the more sober brown-and-white stripe of the men's clothing contrasted with the dark blue and the black affected by the women; however they contrasted and however they were grouped, the effect of these draped figures was always harmonious.

The road between Salt and Amman is a good one—in parts—and very bad at times; with luck the run is made in about an hour and a quarter. You pass



AMMAN: THE BRIDGE.

THE CITY OF WATERS

through some very fine scenery, especially near the Circassian village of Suweileh, where the hills open out and assume grander proportions. Beyond a great cup or series of valleys, the fine silhouette of the mountains beyond Jerash are seen cutting the skyline. As you approach the valley of Amman, the whole landscape softens, although the hills that surround it are sheer rock.

As all journeys in this undeveloped land are taken either on horseback or in cars, a word about these latter may not be out of place. Before criticising them you must consider the nature of the tracks that have to be negotiated, the cross-country runs where there is not even a track, the bumpy condition of even a good road that is affected by the climate. In a country where there are torrential rains at one time of year and no rain at all at others, a road is bound to get into bad condition unless it is carefully attended to after the rainy season. The Trans-Jordan car is called on to negotiate deep wadis, to rattle over stony river beds, to stick in the sand and to slither over the rock. It has to pick its way over fields where only the faintest wheel track suggests that anything has passed that way before. Now although the luxurious cars are far more comfortable, you can hardly do better than hire an apparently broken-down Ford, which will come out victoriously after the most break-neck course.

The Trans-Jordan chauffeur is generally a character. Shabby, smiling, independent, he passes unmoved through the most trying adventures; he is so persistent that the most difficult problems are solved at last, and so indifferent to the future of his car that he seldom hesitates to try a possibly losing hazard. He is a bit of an acrobat, too. One chauffeur I had used to

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to bend down so low to examine his front tyre that he reminded me of nothing so much as of a man engaged in the sport of tent-pegging. It was just the same swooping movement, and he always righted himself before an accident occurred. This same man brought the usual friend to assist in an emergency or perhaps to enjoy the run; when he allowed the boy to take his place at the wheel and wanted to change seats with him while the car was in motion, he used to climb over the bonnet instead of moving into the other seat in the usual way.

Without wishing to spoil the character of the country, or to make Trans-Jordan a paradise for trippers, the passer-by cannot fail to wish that there were more roads and better ones. The scenery is sometimes very fine and is always interesting; the historic and artistic interest is great and the climate is very pleasant. Only those who care for scenery and the relics of the past would be likely to journey so far, but it would be worth while to open up the country for such pilgrims for the sake of the national exchequer. Trans-Jordan is a poor country because much of its land is desert and a great deal of it is not cultivated as it should be, but it is also a country with rich possibilities. At present it is only too common to find any young man with energy and brains say that he must emigrate because there is no future for him in his own country.

In Amman I met Major Benton Fletcher, with whom I had arranged to collaborate in writing a book on the ruins of old Arabian cities. He had just drawn a portrait of King Hussein and was going to call on the Emir before he and his father left Amman for Mecca. It was my only chance of seeing him, as I hoped to be on my way to Petra by the time he returned, so I



AMMAN: RUINS OF THE ROMAN BATH.

THE CITY OF WATERS

followed up a letter of introduction by a morning call.

The Emir owned a villa standing in a garden just opposite the Roman theatre, but he had, in a moment of generosity, given it away to one of his followers. As he was building himself a palace just outside the town, and as he is said to prefer tent life to anything else, perhaps he did not want it; for the time being it was lived in by King Hussein, the Emir himself inhabiting a tiny house on the other side of the road.

We went up the outside staircase to the upper story and were received by a stalwart nigger and other servants and shown into a moderate-sized room with the usual divan on one side and some armchairs on the other. The servant gave us coffee and then a party of Ceylonese, who had come to congratulate King Hussein on his election to the Caliphate, joined us. Presently the Emir, who had been out riding, came in, very gracious and friendly. He was dressed in red under a brown abayah; his gold-hilted sword hung from a richly ornamented belt and his full face with its large dark eyes and close-cut beard was framed in a white kaffia.

Conversation through an interpreter is always unsatisfactory. The Emir speaks French, but prefers to talk Arabic, having no fondness for foreign tongues. The Ceylonese talked broken English, their leader saying over and over again how delighted the Ceylonese were to think that they could go to Mecca to see their Caliph—their very own Caliph—whose hands they could kiss.

For my part I reminded the Emir of a service in the mosque at Woking in which he took part, followed

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by a lunch at the Imam's residence to which I had been invited by my old friend Lord Headley, himself a Moslem. The Emir remembered it also, and when I said that I was sorry not to have seen King Hussein, he sent a card into the King on which he wrote my name in Arabic. Soon after, an officer came, who conducted us across the road to the Royal villa, where we were taken upstairs and shown into a sort of ante-room; this was a larger and far better appointed house than the one we had just left. We were taken to a sofa by a side door and had not waited long before a little old gentleman in a long robe and a turban came out and saluted us. It was the King himself who had come out to welcome us in person. He motioned me to sit by him on the sofa, and then we had some talk through an interpreter. King Hussein repeated several times that he would do all he could to help us, and when he heard that we were bound for Petra, he asked us if we would like to go with him in the royal train as far as El-Qatrani, a station on the line where we were to encamp the first night.

The idea, at first, appealed to me tremendously. To travel along the Pilgrim route—or very near it—in the pilgrim train would surely be an experience; perhaps we could somehow get to Mecca itself! Not only did the idea appeal to both of us, but it seemed discourteous to refuse such a kind offer. We accepted hastily and the talk went on.

King Hussein is small and spare, and age has set its mark on him, but his eyes have a penetrating look, and he has an air of authority that becomes him. He reminded me, curiously enough, of an early impression of Queen Victoria; there was something quietly autocratic about him. As head of a family



AMMAN : THE RIVER.

THE CITY OF WATERS

and a man who has long occupied a position of importance, his new dignities sit lightly on him.

When it was necessary to make arrangements for this addition to his retinue, the King resolved to consult the Emir, or rather to tell him what he wished done. He turned to one of his followers and said simply:

“ Send for Abdalla !”

Again he reminded me of Queen Victoria, who never could realise that her children had grown up.

When the Emir came he very sensibly put an end to the project, which was really quite an impossible one. He said that all arrangements had been made by Peake Pasha for the whole party, and that we should be stranded at Qatrani two days before the rest of them arrived. So we were obliged to decline the offer, but I very much appreciated the kind thought that prompted it, due, I feel sure, to the friendship of Lord Headley, who had accomplished the pilgrimage to Mecca in his company last year.

The following day all Amman turned out to see the King and the Emir make a State departure, accompanied by the heir-apparent, the Emir Ali. The whole space between the theatre and the villa was thronged with a holiday crowd, the Arab Legion was on duty, boy scouts of all ages from infants to young men turned up with banners. The old King was greeted with enthusiasm, and after he left the house the guns up above the theatre on the Citadel Hill boomed a salute.

CHAPTER V

RABBOTH AMMON

STANDING among the ruins on the Citadel Hill of Amman, where was the old stronghold of Rabbath Ammon, one has a fine view of the surrounding country. All around, still enclosed by the remains of the walls that once encircled the fortress, is a perfect chaos of fallen stone; down in the valley the modern Circassian village sprawls over the site of ancient Philadelphia. The situation is impressive, showing the strong contrast of verdant wadi and beetling rock to which one gets accustomed in Trans-Jordan.

The river winds below between poplars and willows; it is spanned by a modern bridge, not far from which are the ruins of a Roman bath and a single bold arch which is all that remains of the vaulting that once covered in the river for some three hundred yards. Beyond the bridge about a dozen pillars stand before the noble theatre that is built into the hollow of the hill. On the other side of the road is all that remains of the Odeum.

Although the ruins are entirely Roman, the town that was built on the site of the Ammonite capital was originally Greek and one of the earliest of the cities of the Decapolis, being founded by Ptolemy Philadelphus II., the Macedonian ruler of Egypt. He called it Philadelphia of Herakles of Cœle Syria, and caused it to be laid out after the usual plan. Dignified, complete, orderly and convenient, the lower town lay along the course of a rippling stream; up here, on the Citadel Hill, the Greek colonists, and later the Romans, must have looked down on the street of columns, the Temples, the public buildings



AMMAN : "EHEU, FUGACES !"

RABBOTH AMMON

and private houses, the theatre and the baths that made up a whole so strangely like the cities of their native lands.

The citadel area occupies a space of about twenty-nine acres, being therefore a little smaller than the Temple area in Jerusalem, that occupies thirty-five acres. The walls are formed of uncemented blocks of stone, and they show, in places, evidence of the work of three races—the foundation of the Ammonite fort, being built over by the Romans and later by the Moslem architects. The space enclosed is of rather a peculiar shape, owing to the lie of the land, the hill forming an angle to the south-west and being separated on the north from what appears to be the continuation of the shoulder by an artificial depression. Within this space were once three great terraces, each over a thousand feet long, lying at different levels. Along these terraces the principal buildings of the upper town stood.

Wandering about among the masses of fallen stone, you come on little that helps you to build up in the imagination the magnificent Citadel of old days. The broken shaft of a column, a Corinthian capital, or a fragment of a mighty cornice are all that can be found to suggest that just here was the Pronaos of the great Temple of Herakles; from such scattered scraps of masonry it is hard to recall the past magnificence of the buildings that once crowned the hill, dominating the valley and the lower town.

“He is not to be esteemed a diligent writer,” says Josephus in his didactic way, “who does no more than change the disposition and order of other men’s works, but rather he who not only writes a new book, but the matter of whose book is original.” There is a

TRANS-JORDAN

good deal of truth in this rather caustic remark, but it is one that is very difficult to live up to in a country in which every stone has a story. That story is, perhaps, not so well documented as that of Western Palestine, but it has moments of dramatic splendour, when events are lit up by the limelight of history in a way that stirs the imagination. The best guide-book on either side of Jordan is the Bible, and several Old Testament stories suggest themselves irresistibly on the Citadel Hill.

We all know that the Children of Israel did not relish the idea of attacking the Ammonites, but we can appreciate their reluctance better up here on the summit of one of their strong places.

“The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to Heaven,” the Israelites protested to the Almighty, when ordered to attack the Amorites whom they conquered when they could not pass the border of Ammon.

We all know the story of David falling in love with beautiful Bathsheba and sending her inconvenient husband to the siege of Rabboth Ammon with orders that he was not to return, but it is distinctly more interesting here where you can look down the very parapet under which he probably fell. And it was up here that David came after his general had taken all the lower town, just in time to get the kudos of receiving the submission of the besieged. He did not behave well to the vanquished, even allowing for the fact that they had begun by insulting him; he took the crown off the King's head and placed it on his own, and he afterwards treated the Ammonites with brutal cruelty. One would like to know what the Ammonite capital looked like and what the booty was that David

RABBOTH AMMON

took back to Jerusalem. Where was the great bed—or perhaps the throne as some writers think—of Og, King of Bashan? What was left in Rabbath Ammon after the Israelites went away?

Israel was always at war with Moab and Ammon, both of which are always spoken of in the Bible in terms of contempt. Ammon never forgave Israel for taking the land of Sihon, King of the Amorites, which that King had stolen from them; three hundred years after the event, they went to war because the Jews refused to give it back. And then it was, of course, a war of religion, a war between Jehovah and the false gods of the heathen. In the Bible there are frequently pæons of victory, but none of the “taunt songs” are more arrogant than that of Mesha, King of Moab, which was found at Dibon on what is known as the Moabite stone. I could not help thinking of it here where these far-away happenings seem affairs of yesterday.

The Moabites, like the Ammonites, are said to be descended from Lot; they hated their distant kinsmen the Israelites wholeheartedly. They were devoted to their tribal gods, Moab to Kemosh, a form of Baal, and Ammon to Molock. In reading the script of the Moabite stone one is struck by the intimate terms on which Mesha was with Kemosh; also by the fact that there was a shrine to Jehovah in Mount Nebo. It is superbly arrogant, and is the memorial of a King who tried, and sometimes succeeded in his efforts to throw off the yoke of Israel.

Leaving out the lacunes, caused by the stone being broken by the Arabs, it runs like this:

“I am Mesha, son of Kemosh, King of Moab, the Daibonite. My father was King over Moab thirty years, and I became King after my father. And I

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made this high place for Kemosh . . . because he saved me from all . . . and because he made me see my desire upon all them that hated me.

“ Omri, King of Israel, he afflicted Moab many days, because Kemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him, and he too said, I will afflict Moab. In my days . . . I said my desire upon him and upon his house, and Israel perished utterly for ever (!).

“ And Omri took possession of the land of Mehedeba (Madeba), and he dwelt in it his days and half his son's days, forty years; but Kemosh restored it in my days.

“ And I built Ba'al-meon and I made therein the reservoir and I built Girgathan.

“ And the men of Gad had dwelt in the land of Ataroth from of old; and the King of Israel built Ataroth for himself. And I fought against the city and took it. And I slew all the people—the city a gazing stock unto Kemosh and unto Moab. And I brought thence the altar hearth of Dandoh (?) and I dragged it before Kemosh. . . .

“ And Kemosh said to me, Go, take Nebo against Israel. And I went by night and fought against it from the break of dawn till noontide, and I took it and slew all . . . seven thousand m(en) and women and damsels, for I had devoted it to Ashtar-Kemosh. And I took thence the . . . of Yahweh and I dragged them before Kemosh.

“ And the King of Israel had built Yahas and dwelt therein while he fought against me. And Kemosh drove him out before me. I took of Moab two hundred men, all the chiefs thereof; and I led them against Yahas and took it to Daidon.”

Having noted down his conquests and having rendered tribute to Kemosh for his support, Mesha



AMMAN • THE SASANIAN BUILDING FROM WITHIN

RABBOTH AMMON

proceeds to set forth the improvements that he had carried out and the places that he had built during his reign.

"I built QRHH, the walls of Ye'arim and the walls of the Mound; and I built the gates thereof and I built the towers thereof; and I built the King's house; and I made the sluices of the reservoir for water in the midst of the city and there was no cistern in the middle of the city, in QRHH; and I said to all the people, Make you each a cistern in his house. And I cut the cutting of QRHH, with the help of the prisoners of Israel.

"I built Aro'er and I made the highway by the Arnon. I built Beth-bamoth, for it was overthrown. I built Beser, for it was in ruins. . . ."

The concluding sentences are rather obscure because half obliterated. He tells the names of places that he built and apparently lays claim to having added a great number of cities to his kingdom. It ends, characteristically enough, with a command from Kemosh to fight the people of the Hauran. "And Kemosh said to me, Go down, fight against the Hauronan . . . and I went down. . . ."

On the northern spur of the hill, above the steep descent from the summit of which you can look down on the place where the brave Uriah the Hittite died a soldier's death, is a very interesting and beautiful building which has been traditionally supposed to stand on the site of his tomb. How this curious tradition arose is not known, but I think that Mukadasi was the first to point it out. It seems unlikely, on the face of it, that anyone should have erected a monument to the unfortunate Hittite, but there must have been some foundation for the idea. The building that

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stands over the supposed tomb is not a mosque, as some writers have called it, for it has no feature that would have fitted it for such a purpose; it is not a church, for although the form appears to be cruciform, the four chambers at the corners complete the square. There are also no windows.

It is most probable that the lofty room we now see was a hall in a palace, built in the eighth century. Although an earlier date has been suggested, the evidence brought to bear seems decisive.

Entering in under the bold, ruined archway, you find yourself in a large square room which has four recesses under arches. The decorative stonework is most remarkable and is well preserved; it consists of shallow panels with round heads standing on a string course, supporting small arches that spring from coupled dwarf columns. The design in these panels varies; it is always decorative, sometimes very intricate. It is a Moslem building showing Sasanian influence; the panels have been likened to the decorations on the outer walls of the Dome of the Rock, the inference being that it is contemporary with the mosque. Some authorities have therefore placed it in the reign of the Caliph Al-Mamun, whose name is immortalised in an inscription in the mosque as the builder of the edifice; but the date is the date of the Umayyad Caliph Abdul-Malek ibn Marwan, who was the real builder, but whose name had been replaced by his successor. Whether "El Qasr" dates from the beginning of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century, it is a very fine specimen of Sasanian architecture.

Not far from this monument, by far the most interesting now remaining on the Citadel Hill, is a large rock-hewn cistern which has a choked-up passage leading



AMMAN THE LITTLE TEMPLE OF THE BELL

RABBOTH AMMON

to it, supposed to be the conduit that formerly brought water to the garrison. Once, when Antiochus was besieging Amman, a prisoner found out the secret and found means to tell it to the besieging force, who promptly stopped it up and forced the garrison to surrender.

Passing back by the fragments of the Pronaos of the Temple of Herakles and taking the path that leads down to the valley, you can visit the Roman theatre with its tiers of seats divided by gangways and traversed by steep flights of steps. The Emperor's seat is still in good preservation and has a scallop-shell canopy overhead. Horses are now stabled in the rock chambers at the back of the wide passages that run round the theatre, and it is curious to see them stepping along between the tiers of seats where once the colonial gay world of Philadelphia sat to see the show.

There is little remaining of the Roman city in modern Amman. In the Suk you come on fragments of columns embedded in masonry or lying prone across the doorway of some shanty; by the river are some remains, and if you follow it where the shadow of the overhanging trees dapples the water, you come at last to a Roman bridge near a ferry. On the other side of the stream is a picturesque archway. The mosques and the Arab bazaar mentioned by Baedeker exist no longer, but those who take an intelligent interest in prehistoric times have an endless source of study in the dolmens and Megalithic remains that are nowhere so plentiful as in Trans-Jordan. The hillsides are also riddled with rock tombs and caves.

Following the road out of the town that passes by the summer camp and the partly built palace of the Emir Abdallah, you come to a Greek mausoleum

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familiarly known as “ the Temple of the little Bell.” This name, which is local, has been given because a short column with what remains of an urn on its summit looks rather like a bell, especially when seen from a distance. It is said to date as far back as the first or second century of our era, and is simple in design and ornate in the beautifully chiselled double cornice. It is interesting as having a dome, and is extremely impressive, though so small, partly because of the isolation of its position. The golden colour of the stone set against the waving cornfields and the distant blue of the hills makes a very attractive picture ; it excites curiosity because so little is known about its history.



ARAB BOYS.

CHAPTER VI

THE DESERT

AT the Creation, so we are told, an angel was given a bag of stones to distribute over the world; unluckily, the bag had a hole in it and the entire contents was shot out in one place. There are other countries that lay claim to this shower of stones, but I feel convinced that they fell in Arabia and that the greater quantity are still to be found between Amman and Petra. Even in the cultivated land near the former, stones are always appearing and rocks crown every hill-top, sometimes looking, at a distance, as if they were walled towns. As you get into the desert stones alternate with spare grass and scrub; sometimes they are white and sometimes they are just slabs of black basalt.

We started from Amman on the 21st of March, a procession of four cars and a motor-lorry, under the able guidance of Peake Pasha, whose Arab Legion was to form our escort later on. It is still unsafe to make this journey unprotected, and the great difficulty of making arrangements for a stay in Petra had almost made me despair of getting there at all. The efforts made by Cook in conjunction with the Hidjaz railway company had fallen through, and there seemed little chance of meeting any party of people wishing to accomplish a journey which was attended with so much uncertainty and with such considerable expense. I was feeling distinctly depressed when I called one morning at the Governorate in Jerusalem to consult Sir Ronald Storrs. The Governor is always ready to help, but he suffers a good deal from people who are so vague that they do not know what they want themselves.

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"Tell me," he said, "exactly what you want."

"I want to go to Petra," I said, without much hope that he could make any useful suggestion.

"Then you had better come with us!" was the unexpected reply.

So it was all settled in five minutes. It turned out, luckily for me, that the Governor had never had time to go to Petra during his five years of office, and as Lady Storrs was equally anxious to see the "rose-red city," the expedition was arranged.

Owing to a misunderstanding Major Benton Fletcher and I, who had agreed to share a car, found ourselves without one the day before the start. We thought that all the cars had been ordered from Jerusalem, but it turned out that, though all camping arrangements were made for us, the cars were arranged for separately. We had, therefore, to take what we could get in Amman.

The morning was lovely, with a clear blue sky and a fresh breeze; we waited by the river for the car, and were rather startled to see a ramshackle old Ford turn up which looked as if it could not hold together much longer. The chauffeur was a diminutive man dressed in European clothes and wearing a round woolly cap; he was accompanied by a shabby but cheerful youth with patched clothes, ragged boots, and a disreputable old tarboosh on his sleek head. When asked if he had plenty of spare tyres, the little man replied that he had none; on being told that he must procure some he replied that there was not a single spare tyre in Amman. Time was precious and it seemed no use arguing with a limited vocabulary, so we got our bags slung on and started for the meeting-place by Peake Pasha's house beyond the theatre.

Very soon after leaving the town we began to bucket

THE DESERT

over the stones with which the angel had sprinkled the ground so liberally; when not running on tracks among the cultivated land we shot up and down the embankments of the Hidjaz railway, crossed its very un-level crossings, dropped down into wadis and struggled up almost perpendicular banks. The car, that was almost springless, took every obstacle in fine fashion, and we began to have confidence in its durability.

The narrow gauge railway that runs between Damascus and Mecca was begun in 1901 by Sultan Abdul Hamid II., for the use of the Moslems making their annual pilgrimage to the shrine of the Prophet. Special taxes were instituted to meet the expense of the outlay, and the whole of the Moslem world helped by voluntary contributions. Although it is essentially a pilgrim railway, trains run all the year at irregular intervals. A branch line from Dera'a to Haifa connects Trans-Jordan with the coast, and if ever the country is opened up no doubt this Hidjaz railway will play an important part.

During our first day's run we were seldom out of sight of this wandering line, and we stopped at most of its stations placed at regular intervals of eighteen kilometres. Oddly enough, it did not bring a note of civilisation into the barren landscape. The trainless line gave one an impression of a dead world, and the empty stations, several of which had been bombed during the late war, only heightened the feeling of desolation. To Peake Pasha they seemed to convey a certain amount of satisfaction, for he had directed the bombing; with one of these exploits, I seem to remember, he had celebrated his birthday !

At the first of these stations we found some life, as a

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group of men were measuring out oats in sacks. They good-humouredly posed for a photograph, incidentally breaking up the group, which refused to re-form in its first unconscious picturesqueness. Other stations that we passed showed nothing but a gaunt building standing over a cistern, but near one there was a Bedawin "house of hair" and a tank where we stopped to take in water. Three young women came up to the car, smiling and curious, touching my clothing to see what it was made of and carrying on a more or less wordless conversation. One of them had dyed her hair with henna, making a strange contrast with her dark face, liberally tatooed, and her fine black eyes; another held a spindle in her hand, wound round with coloured wool.

One thing we noticed from the start, and that was the pride felt by our chauffeur in the journey we were about to accomplish. It was no everyday affair, this expedition to Petra, the inaccessible rocky city, the "Wadi Musa," as the Arabs call the valley that runs through the girdle of mountains. Whenever we met a party of Arabs crowded together in one of those rough-and-ready cars that sometimes take the place of the classic camel, we stopped to exchange greetings, for our little man knew everybody. And he always said with an air of great importance:

"We are going to Wadi Musa!"

And the Arabs smiled and talked and apparently wished him good luck as he released the clutch and we went our way, jumping the railway lines and plunging over all obstacles in a way impossible to any car but one in hard training. The little man appeared to rejoice in difficulties, which he overcame in the full tide of conversation with the youth, often gesticulating



NATIVE WOMAN.

THE DESERT

at a critical moment, as if to say, "That is the way to do it!"

There was very little life to be seen. Sometimes there were camels pasturing among the scanty grass, sometimes sheep or cattle or tribes of black goats. A shepherd standing motionless with his rifle slung over his shoulders and his long crook between his hands gave the peculiar cry that his sheep knew; it was a succession of grunts, whistles and calls. A little later we passed a whole flock of graceful long-legged storks, their black and white plumage glistening in the sunshine.

It was evening when we arrived at El Qatrani station, where we were to encamp for the night. The tents were pitched in some waste ground the other side of the line, beyond which the moon, then nearly full, rose in a sky thickly studded with stars. We settled down as well as we could and then went over to the station, where we had dinner in one of the rooms which the war had happily left untouched. The next morning we started off at an early hour.

Beyond Qatrani the country is completely merged in the Syrian desert. It is not like the Egyptian desert with its rolling waste of golden sand; it is paler in colour and broken up by tufts of vegetation, occasional wild flowers, and the inevitable stones. Sometimes the prospect widened out and became grander, showing distant mountains ringing round the wide expanse of sandy plain. As the sun's rays grew more intense towards midday we saw quite a number of mirages: a wash of sea with the suggestion of a coast-line, a lake bordered by palm trees—the illusion was complete while it lasted.

Once we met a Bedawin tribe, or part of one, on the

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move. A dignified old man with a white beard headed the procession; he was followed by four women carrying two long poles on their shoulders on which a mass of white drapery had the appearance of covering a corpse, but was probably only some of the household possessions. In another line a long procession of camels picked their way silently on the soft sand.

Sometimes the cars had to stop for one another, sometimes the motor-lorry, carrying all the provisions, stuck in a wadi and had to be dragged out; the consequence being that we were rather behind time. As the evening drew on we found the country wilder and more craggy, and then we came to a valley through which a pretty brook ran. We stopped for a short time and might have camped here with advantage, but it was thought best to push on, as we were all anxious to get as much time as possible in Petra.

Up and up we climbed, mounting up between hill-sides that were covered with severed tree trunks, cut by the Turks in the late war. As the darkness began to fall we came out on a wind-swept plateau, where we found horses waiting with our escort of the Arab Legion. After some discussion it was decided to eat a picnic meal before riding down to Petra, which could be accomplished better after the moon had risen than in the half-light.

I walked to the brow of the plateau and looked down into the gathering darkness. From a height of some 5,000 feet above sea-level a wide and marvellous view was extended at our feet. Away to the right was the wide sweep of the Ghor, its faint, curious colours melting into mist; to the left the rocky strata enclosing Petra reared its fantastic pinnacles, violet in the fading light; and above it all a strong orange after-glow of



THE WADI MUSA.

THE DESERT

the sunset still flooded the western sky. Beyond Petra the silhouette of Mount Hor was just visible.

The bolder spirits rode off after the moon rose, but some of us slept on that cold and windy plateau in tents, and were rewarded for a sleepless night by the vision of a perfect dawn.

It began with a pale, almost colourless sky lighting up over the shadowy mass of mountain peaks below; and then the topmost peaks caught a faint rose tinge, leaving the rest in blue shadow. Gradually the whole sky grew warm with the sun's approach and each fantastic crag stood out boldly from the mass, and the pink became gold as the sun rose in all his morning glory, and the vast sweep of the Ghor was laid out at our feet like a many-coloured map. That morning we rode down to Petra.

CHAPTER VII

PETRA

EVER since Burckhardt, in the year 1812, re-discovered Petra, its rare visitors have stood entranced at that point in the Siq where the first glimpse of the temple tomb known as the Treasure House of Pharaoh is obtained. The impression of the "rose red" temple seen framed in the dark rocks of the narrow gorge has been described so often that I imagined the effect would be discounted. But it was not so. The sudden vision is so compelling, so strong in contrast, that it cannot fail to impress the most unimaginative. It is not only the contrast between the dark cliffs and the light beyond, it is that other contrast between the wildest aspect of nature and the delicate art of the classic sculptor that startles the newcomer. Perhaps that is one of the charms of Petra—it is always surprising us with some new effect of colour or contour, with the whole unusual character of its monuments and the scenery by which they are surrounded. "The strangest city in our Planet" it is called in "The Jordan Valley and Petra," by W. Libby and F. E. Hoskins; and I do not think that they are wrong.

What is true of the first vision in the Siq is true of the whole valley. No amount of preparatory reading can stale the sheer delight experienced by anyone with an eye for beauty of colour and romance of scenery. The colour of the Nubian sandstone varies. Sometimes it is dull dark red with purple grainings; sometimes it is cream or pale pink, running through the gamut of rose, or rather of flame, tones until the sun brings out a vivid crimson hue. The expression of "rose red," so often quoted, does not seem to me to



PETRA : LOOKING TOWARDS THE SIQ.

PETRA

be as true as flame colour. It is rather a city of fire than one of roses, and the flames show even in the shadows, which have none of the cool grey tones usual to them, but have an underlying crimson glow. I remember one rock near the theatre which resembled a Pre-Raphaelite painting of symbolic flames with grey and crimson markings in converging semicircular wreaths like smoke and fire.

It was a pleasant moment when we left our wind-swept camping ground and rode down into the valley and through the fine open country that ended in the defile of the Siq. As we rode on we passed the Roman theatre and many of the interesting tombs, threading our way among the stones by the river-bed, bordered by a tangle of oleanders; we passed by the tents of Sir Alexander Kennedy's encampment near the remains of the triple gate and arrived at our temporary home in the caves.

We dismounted in a narrow gully which widened out a little farther on into a sort of natural amphitheatre; immediately to the left was a large rock chamber, whether originally a tomb or dwelling-place I do not know, but I think the latter. This was our dining-room. Round about among the rocks that surrounded the open space were the bedrooms prepared for us in rock-hewn caves that must have been tombs a couple of thousand years ago.

It was all great fun; even the drawbacks consequent on finding out the things that ought to have been brought, but which one had overlooked, had their amusing side. Everything had to be carried down the last stage of our journey on the backs of mules; we were a large party, and provisions for the whole week had to be brought. If in our desire to bring as little baggage

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as possible we were rather Spartan as regards equipment, it was all in keeping with the adventure, and I, for one, would not change with the tourist of the future, who may yet stay in the Grand Petra Palace Hotel and have ice sent down from Hebron.

I must confess that I am not a very conscientious sightseer. I left many important sites in Petra unvisited by reason of the short time at my disposal; I skipped others because I wanted to take in those I had already seen, thinking that, in this way, I should gain a better idea of the whole than if I had raced round as an American lady did recently in Jerusalem. She was asked if she had enjoyed seeing the Holy City; she replied with an expression of concentrated melancholy: "I got over the worst of it yesterday!"

When I think of Petra I seem to see boulder on boulder, piled up in fantastic pinnacles and spires against a strong blue sky; bold projections, gigantic masses of dull red rock, masses of green oleander leaves, not yet with flower. I can recall the theatre, with tiers of seats cut in dark red sandstone, with, just above, a circular row of tombs with little columns resembling opera boxes. Were they tombs? Would the Romans choose this place to have their theatre, in the very heart of the Nabatæan necropolis? The Nabatæans thought that the dead protected the living, and they liked to be surrounded by the tombs of their dead. But the Romans put away the ashes of their countrymen in niches of a columbarium, remains of one of which exist to-day in Petra. The principal dwellings of the Nabatæans were in the valley, those "costly stone-built houses" mentioned by Strabo, but in the earlier times they were certainly cave dwellers, as were the Edomites and Horites before them. On



PETRA - THE NORTH EAST WALL.

PETRA

this subject we cannot do better than see what Sir Alexander Kennedy says in the paper that he read before the Geographical Society in January last. After telling us that there are quite a number of "High Places" in Petra, where successive inhabitants worshipped their supreme god, he says: "These remains" (he is speaking of the monuments generally), "although they have often been called simply *tombs*, are in reality of very varied nature. They include many 'holy places,' sacella and others, with sacrificial arrangements, altars, basins, shrines, symbolic (idol) blocks, votive inscriptions, triclinia for religious, funereal and other feasts; some imposing temples, many living chambers and others probably for trade purposes, as well as places of sepulture."

I am glad to hear this opinion expressed by Sir Alexander and other authorities, for I have never been able to imagine that the houses of the Nabatæans were confined entirely to the valley, or that the vast expanse of rock chambers were designed exclusively for tombs. Many, indeed most of them, were cut for this purpose, but certainly not all. It is curious to reflect how completely the tombs have been rifled, leaving not so much as an inscription, except in one solitary case. Yet all were probably furnished with strongly worded anathemas against those who should disturb the dead or violate the shrine to Dusares. Many of these inscriptions have been found at Medinah Saleh and in the Hauran, and they generally follow the same pattern. Here is a sample, found *in situ* at Al-Hejira:

"This is the sepulchre which 'Aidu, son of Kohailu, son of Elgasi, made for himself and his children and his posterity, and for whomsoever shall produce in his hand a warrant from the hand of 'Aidu: it shall hold

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good for him and for whomsoever 'Aidu during his lifetime shall give leave to bury in it; in the month Nisan, the ninth year of Haretath, King of the Nabatæans, lover of his people. And may Dushara and Manuthu and Quishah curse every one who shall sell this tomb, or buy it, or frame for it any (other) writ, or bury anyone in it except those who are written above. And the tomb and this its inscription are inviolable things, after the manner of what is held inviolable by the Nabatæans and Shalamians, for ever and ever."

There are three distinct types of tombs that have been variously classified; the simplest classification comes from the author we quoted just now, consisting of Assyrian, Egyptian and classical. The Assyrian has the distinctive crow-steps; the Egyptian has the heavy cornice and the straight, severe lines so characteristic of that type of architecture, to which the crow-steps in a larger and simpler form are added; the classical speaks for itself. And yet there are those who attribute the classical influence entirely to Rome, and place the date of the Khazne later than the Roman occupation. The impression that it conveyed to me was far rather that of a Colonial reproduction of Greek art than of a temple built by Romans for their own use. I was, therefore, delighted to find, after my return from Petra, that Dr. Dalman supported this theory with the weight of his authority.

The architecture and decoration of the Khazne, he says, are not classical, but probably derived from the first century after Christ. The pomp of the late Roman style is wanting, the style is more Hellenistic than Roman. He dates it loosely as during the reigns of the last Nabatæan Kings, and suggests that it might



PETRA : THE DEIR.

PETRA

well have been the mausoleum of one of these, perhaps never tenanted on account of a political upheaval. No one can look at this stately monument without agreeing that it was destined to receive the remains of a King or to celebrate his achievements. The eagles that guard the roof are not only the symbol of royalty: they were connected with the religious rites of the Nabatæans and were also reproduced on their coins. The little temple in the upper order may be a shrine of Isis, whose statue still stands in its place; other figures represent Amazons and Victories, one offering a libation at an altar, the other holding out a palm branch.

This beautiful monument is decidedly original in some respects, as buildings erected by the Nabatæans were apt to be. It was copied, but far from artistically, in the immense temple Ed-Deir, which owes far more to its size and to its superb position than to its architectural merit.

The climb up to the Deir is one of the expeditions that leave a strong impression on the mind. It is not always easy to find if you go, as we did, without a guide: the steps cut in the rock stop every now and then, path there is apparently none. But with patience and an occasional retracing of steps, the steep ascent is made, and the views obtained over the city and away to the distant mountains are wonderful. The rocks themselves, that tower above you as you climb up, look like great domes covered with the Gothic tracery of some unfinished cathedral; looking down you see white broom sprayed across a ravine beyond which a distant vista of blue crags suggests the background of a picture by Leonardo da Vinci. The air is so pure that the climb is enjoyable apart from the novelty of

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the scene, and it is only when you stand before the Deir that you may feel disappointed. Carved out of a yellowish rock, it has no beauty of colouring to please the eye, and the architecture reminds one of a modern house with bow windows. It is surely a travesty of the graceful Khazne.

Whether or no you admire the Deir it is a wonderful piece of work, so huge it is and all carved out of the solid rock. Before it a carpet of tulip leaves covered the ground and all around were beautiful views. The sensation was one of the most extraordinary aloofness; nowhere that I can remember have I felt so alone with nature.

Who were the first inhabitants of Petra? We know that Esau came here after Jacob stole his birthright, apparently turning out the Horites from their lair among the mountains. His descendants were the Edomites, who were always in disgrace in the Bible story: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" The Edomites refused passage to the Israelites when returning from the captivity in Egypt, and the feud seems always to have gone on, although Esau and Jacob had been reconciled somewhere in this neighbourhood. Tradition says that it was here that the children of Israel suffered from thirst and murmured, wishing that they had died rather than come to such an evil place; whereupon Moses was commanded to strike the rock and water would flow. Moses struck the rock twice, well and truly it appears, for the cleft that he made through which water flowed is the gorge of the Siq! And that is the reason why the Arabs call the city that



PETRA. JUST BELOW THE TOMB OF THE URN.

PETRA

was always known as Petra (the Rock), the Valley of Moses—the Wadi Musa.

Mount Hor is, of course, the traditional site of the tomb of Aaron, but that is not the most interesting possibility in a district that is alive with historical association. Dr. Alois Musil, who has spent twenty-eight years studying the history and topography of Arabia, is convinced that Kadesh, round about which the Israelites spent the long exile in the desert, was really Petra.

The Edomites continued to be on bad terms with the Israelites, and it is said that they took advantage of their captivity in Babylon to annex some of the land east of Jordan, left defenceless on that account. They certainly left Petra, where they were succeeded by a tribe of Arabs, the Nabatæans.

The Nabatæans were a people of great antiquity, though we only know their history from a comparatively recent date. They had culture when they first appeared and were to a certain extent Hellenised. They were a nation of soldiers and merchants, two professions that went together in times when commerce was still an adventure. Their caravans went to all parts and Petra stood just in the centre of the great caravan routes. Dr. Musil thinks that they must have had a military post in each of the great oases of Arabia, where Nabatæan inscriptions have been found by him; they are found in quantities in the Hauran, they have been even found in Italy. For a caravan passing through the Nabatæan territory, a Nabatæan guard was necessary and tribute was exacted; the riches that flowed in and out of the city are incalculable. From India and Persia, from Egypt and the interior of Arabia, from the maritime cities of Syria and Palestine, the

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caravans wound their way, following the ancient caravan routes.

In A.D. 106 Petra and " Arabia belonging to Petra " were taken by the Romans and absorbed into the empire; a period of great prosperity followed, though the true national life was gone. After the fall of Rome and the rise of Palmyra as a centre of commerce, the caravan routes changed and the city was apparently deserted. What happened to the Romanised Nabatæans we do not know. There is a gap in the history of Petra until the Crusaders came and built the fort and chapel, remains of which are still to be found among the rocks and ruins of the city. They remained here about a hundred and fifty years, after which the veil falls again, only to be partially lifted when the celebrated Sultan Beybars comes at the end of the thirteenth century. Six hundred years later, the intrepid Burckhardt, disguised as Sheikh Ibrahim, penetrated into what was then a forbidden city, one that he only surmised must be the Petra of history. As an excuse for his presence he offered up a sacrifice to Haroun, and his guide, who was terrified because he thought that they might be discovered by the wild and superstitious tribes of Arabs who haunted that region, added his words to those of the pretended Sheikh:

" O Haroun, look upon us! It is for you that we slaughter this victim. O Haroun, protect and forgive us! O Haroun, be content with our good intentions, for it is but a lean goat! O Haroun, smooth our paths: and praise be to the Lord of all creatures!"



THE KHAZNE FUR'UN, PETRA.

CHAPTER VIII

LIFE AMONG THE TOMBS

THE dislike of the Arabs to the foreign invasion of Petra is accounted for by their belief that some of the treasure, brought by the caravans of old, is still hidden among the caves. It is for this that the archæologists come year after year and for no other reason. The natives have ransacked the place in search of treasure, and they have riddled the urn over the Khazne with shot in the hope of splitting the stone and setting it free.

But the urn, though injured, has never yet parted to let a shower of gold and jewels fall on some lucky marksman, in spite of which rather depressing circumstance they still cling to their belief in its existence. And the archæologist, out for such different game, has hitherto not found as much to reward him as he would have done had excavations on a large scale been possible. The tombs have been rifled ages ago, and hardly even a skeleton has been found until quite recently, when five were found in a rock-cut grave and carefully examined. Two of them were male skeletons of unusual size and weight, resembling those of a gladiator or a Viking, and totally different from the skeleton of the modern type of Arab. But this is a most rare and indeed unique find. There was a tradition that a mummy had been seen, but it was without foundation.

What did Petra look like in its late Romanised days, when the Roman city stood in the valley, the cup-like valley surrounded by red cliffs that were a network of cave dwellings and tombs? And before those days, when a Nabatæan town occupied the site of the later city? Were the earlier buildings stuccoed and painted

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as has been said ? Truth to tell, we know little of the Nabatæans except what we can glean from Josephus and some of the Latin writers. Strabo is perhaps the most illuminating.

“ The capital of the Nabatæans is called Petra,” he says. “ It is situated on a spot which is surrounded and fortified by a smooth and level rock which externally is abrupt and precipitous and within there are abundant springs of water both for domestic purposes and for watering gardens. Beyond the enclosure the country is for the most part a desert, particularly towards Judæa. . . . It is always governed by a King of royal race. The King has a minister who is one of the Companions and is called Brother. It has excellent laws for the administration of public affairs.

“ Athenodorus, a philosopher and my friend, used to relate with surprise that he found many Romans and also many other strangers residing there. He observed the strangers frequently engaged in litigation, both with one another and with the natives, but the natives had never any dispute among themselves, and lived together in perfect harmony.”

The report of the great wealth of the Arabians reached Rome and made Augustus Cæsar decide either to conquer them or to make friends with them. The people were not only wealthy, they were very prudent, for they exchanged their aromatics and precious stones for silver and gold, “ but never expended with foreigners any part of what they received in exchange.” Rather a curious trait in a people that have always been remarkable for hospitality.

Various sorts of “ aromatics,” Strabo tells us, were produced in Arabia—frankincense and myrrh, the product of trees, cassia of bushes. Each district



PETRA : THE THEATRE.

LIFE AMONG THE TOMBS

specialised in one or other, but in some all three grew, and nard as well. These native products were, of course, brought to Petra on their way to Egypt or Syria.

Strabo also tells a story of a certain Syllæus, a minister of King Aretas of Petra, who led the Roman troops a dance, for which he afterwards paid the penalty with his life. It appears that Augustus sent a general with an army and a fleet to spy out the land, with orders either to conquer or to conciliate. The latter proving difficult, the general resolved to fight the people dwelling in the aromatic country with the help of the Nabatæans. Syllæus promised to lead him by the easiest way, but he took him by pathless wastes on land and directed the fleet to harbourless coasts by sea. After many wanderings and much time wasted, the Romans came to the conclusion that the Nabatæan wanted to make them a cat's-paw to waste the enemies of his country and to end by destroying them by dint of hunger, thirst and general weariness. Which incident, coupled with the natural desire to rob Petra of its fabulous wealth, may have influenced the Romans at a later day when they captured the city.

There are several other points brought out by Strabo in his short though interesting account of this vanished people, that bring them before us rather vividly. They were prudent and accumulated property; the Community fined a man who lost his property and conferred honours on one who increased his patrimony—acting on a principle that is exactly contrary to our original system of bestowing old-age pensions, in which we rewarded a man who had spent his all by giving him a pension and refused it to one who had managed to save a little. Other times, other customs.

There were few slaves in Petra; most people waited

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on each other or on themselves. Even the King waited on others, although he gave feasts in great buildings. They used to eat in companies of thirteen, having apparently no fear of our pet superstition; they drank out of golden cups, and it was not thought correct to take more than eleven at a sitting.

The government was somewhat democratic. The King often rendered an account of his administration to the people; sometimes an enquiry was made concerning his mode of life. Luxuries, however, seem to have been common, for they imported pieces of sculpture, paintings and statues, as well as purple drapery which made the distinguishing costume of the King. King and commoner alike wore the simplest dress, having no tunics, but a girdle round the loins, and sandals. They worshipped Dusares, and had altars on the roofs of their houses where they daily poured out libations and before which they burned frankincense. So that, in addition to the many "high places" on the summits of the rocks, there must have been others on the tops of the houses.

Our life among the tombs was a delightful experience, but it was all too short. I spent a good deal of time photographing, an occupation that involves visiting certain places when the light is right, and was another reason why I saw some parts of Petra well and was obliged to give up trying to see others. One day I picnicked on the steps of the Khazne with Mrs. Peake, whose delightful personality and whose cheery determination to enjoy everything did so much to keep up the spirits of the party. As we sat there we saw a procession ride up which turned out to be composed of the four chauffeurs whom we had left up on the heights looking after the cars. They had come down



PETRA: FROM THE DEIR PLATEAU.

LIFE AMONG THE TOMBS

to have a look at the wonders of Petra, and I was pleased to see our friend with his little round cap on his round, little head astride an ass, looking for all the world like Sancho Panza come to life. They inspected the temple and, I regret to say, wrote their names on one of the columns, and rode off with a friendly soldier who was apparently conducting the party.

That afternoon I dodged the escort, which was really not needed inside the precincts, but which went with us everywhere, and spent an afternoon alone with the Nabatæans. It was very hot, the sun shone on the rugged cliffs, making the shadows inside the openings into the tombs look like blots of ink. I sat on a seat in the theatre and could see from there some of the famous tombs; the ground before me was covered with grass and with countless dandelion flowers, and the valley between was a tangle of tamarisk and oleander. To the right, the street of tombs narrowed till it entered the Siq; over to the left, round the corner where I could not see, beyond the tomb with the urn, were, as I knew, the Corinthian tomb and the tomb with three stories. I made up my mind to visit these monuments then and there, but the sun was hot and the silence was full of strange stories, and I ended by staying where I was.

But there were not many hours of idleness. The days were quite well filled up with expeditions to see this or that famous monument; it was hard walking over the soft red sand and stiff climbing up the rocks. We were all fairly tired by evening, and although various suggestions were made for the evening's amusement, we were quite ready to retire to our caves when the moon, which was full, swam over the opposite banks and flooded the valley with light.

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The moon was one of our great successes at Petra. It was so brilliant that it was impossible to remain in the seclusion of our caves, shaded by a trellis of oleander from the public view. Most of us brought out our camp beds on to the ledge outside and slept in the open. It seemed a sin to go to sleep, but it came almost at once after a strenuous day—or at least so it appeared to me.

The last evening at Petra we dined in the kitchen, a huge cave which had a wood fire in the middle, crackling as the sticks were flung in and shooting up flames high above our heads. Rugs had been put on the floor for a table-cloth on which plates were laid, and we squatted round in true Bedawin fashion, the reason for this change in our usual programme being that the dining-room table and chairs had been packed up preparatory for an early start the next morning. Opposite this cave, on the other side of the stream, was that of the escort, who had also a great fire of sticks. The picturesque figures passing before the fire or going out into the starlight—the moon was beginning to wane, and rose late—to see to the horses tethered outside made a scene that suggested one from some opera. Altogether our last evening had an element of romance.

That night I had more than usual difficulties with a toilette in the semi-darkness, complicated with an heroic endeavour to pack ready for a very early start. The soap dropped, as usual, in the sand, and came up looking like a red sandstone boss off some temple; hairpins disappeared mysteriously, and my hold-all was so gorged with sand that it really seemed full before anything was put in. After wrestling with these trifles "light as air," I crept into my bed under a canopy of stars and went to sleep. I seemed hardly to have put my head



PETRA : FROM A HEIGHT.

LIFE AMONG THE TOMBS

on the pillow before I was awakened by a voice calling from a distance:

“ Four o'clock !”

It was the voice of Peake Pasha, who surely cannot have slept a wink that night, calling his flock to prepare for action.

It certainly *was* an early start !

CHAPTER IX

THE STONE OF THE DESERT

THE chief event of the return journey from Petra was the visit that we paid to the old Crusaders' stronghold El Kerak, where we were the guests of the Sheikh, an old friend of both Sir Ronald Storrs and Peake Pasha. The visit was interesting both because it gave us an opportunity of enjoying desert hospitality, and because we were able to see the remains of the most famous of the Frankish castles east of Jordan.

When the Crusaders came over in the late summer of 1097, they confined their activities to western Palestine, establishing a network of forts, connected strategically, rather on the same plan as that adopted by the Greeks when they founded the cities of the Decapolis. Baldwin I., the first King of Jerusalem, wishing to keep the Turks in order east of Jordan and also to gain possession of the key to the caravan routes, founded Shobek, which was called Mons Regalis after him. Kerak was founded in the latter part of the reign of King Fulk—that is, before 1143—by “Paiens, bouteillers le Roi,” as that charming historian, William of Tyr, spells the name and function of that patriot. A third fort was erected at Petra, near the entrance to the Siq, and the three were sufficient to hold the country around. We had passed by Shobek on the way to Petra, but had not been able to stop to inspect the Arab fort that now crowns the steep ascent.

So much has been said against the Crusaders, who certainly did become emasculated as time went on and intermarriages with other races became common, that it is refreshing to read what the Arab historians have to say in their favour. Their rule was just, the Arabs



KERAK CASTLE.

THE STONE OF THE DESERT

lived happily in their dependencies; the feudal system established on alien soil prospered. The Holy Land became an international centre of colonisation, and we can see what a Frenchman, Foucher de Chartres, thought of life in the East. He writes:

“ Consider and reflect inwardly in what a manner in our own times God has transformed the West into the East. We, who have come from the West, that man who was a Roman or a Frank, has become here a Galilean or an inhabitant of Palestine; that man who used to inhabit Rheims or Chartres, now sees himself a citizen of Tyr or Antioch. We have already forgotten the places where we were born, they are unknown to some of us or, at any rate, they are not spoken of any more. Some of us possess already houses and servants which belong to them by right of heredity; others have married a wife who is not a compatriot, a Syrian, an Armenian, or even a Sarrasin who has received the grace of baptism; another again has living in his house sons and daughters-in-law, nephews, or even great-nephews; some cultivate the vine, some work in the fields. They speak different languages, but have already learned to understand one another. Confidence makes the most opposite nations friendly. It is written, indeed, that the lion and the ox will feed from the same manger. He who was a stranger is now a native, the pilgrim has become an inhabitant; day by day our relations and our neighbours come to join us here; those who were poor in their own country, God makes rich in this; those who only had a share in a farm have here a town by God’s grace. Why should a man return to the West when he has found the East so profitable ?”

The Lord of Kerak must have been one of the most

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important feudal chiefs of the time, for Kerak was, as a fortress, second in strength and position only to Jerusalem. Renaud de Chatillon, that ambitious and hot-headed individual, who ended by having his head cut off in Saladin's tent by that monarch's own hand, caused a flotilla to be made at Kerak, and transported it on the backs of camels to the Gulf of Akaba, whence he sailed down the Red Sea to plunder Mecca and Medina. At its greatest period the whole fief of "Oultre Jourdain" belonged to the Lord of Kerak, which included all Moab and Gilead. It was also the seat of an archbishopric. And before all this comparatively recent history, there was the older story of Kir of Moab, before which there must, from time immemorial, have always been some sort of a fort in this commanding position.

We slept in the tents put up in the station of El Qatrani the night before we went to Kerak, and once more breakfasted on the platform. As before, the desolation of the place struck me; no train came in or went out, there was no stir except that which we made ourselves, and that which was added by a pack of barking dogs. Soon after breakfast we started off.

The first view of Kerak is obtained after a sudden turn in the road—a real road, by the way—when you see before you a very deep valley with a river running through it and a series of steep, rocky hill-tops. On the summit of one, right up high against the sky, is the still impressive silhouette of the walls and towers of the fortress and the town. Deep down the gorge lies between the road and the castle hill, spanned by a stone bridge, from which the road ascends sharply to the modern entrance to the town, passing, halfway up, the tunnel cut in the rock which was once, with



KERAK . GENERAL VIEW.

THE STONE OF THE DESERT

another of the same kind, the only passage into the fortress. The gradient of this road was so steep that the Ford snorted up it backwards, turned round as it eased off, and shot suddenly into the open space before the official residence of the Governor. Having been delayed because of the time required for sketching and photography, we arrived too late to see the reception of Sir Ronald, but a company of Peake's Arab Legion was drawn up in front of the house and a picturesque crowd of natives waited on the further side of the road. Upstairs in the usual diwan we found the rest of our party and were duly presented to the Governor and other notables. After some time—for in the East the old Arabic proverb still holds good, that Allah is with the patient, but that "hurry is from Satan"—we left the Governor's house and went to that of the Sheikh.

Rufeifan Pasha el Majali lives for half the year in houses of hair and the other half in his large stone house in town. This house is built round a courtyard, in which was a fountain; a staircase led to the upper floor, where we passed through an anteroom to an inner diwan upholstered in striped Damascene satin of yellow and red, which reminded me of the Talavera satin in Madrid. On the seats that skirted the walls our party of eleven seated themselves, the guests of honour immediately to the right of the door, to the left of which the notables of Kerak assembled. Among these latter I remember the Mayor, a good-looking, middle-aged man, very dark, with a profile like that of an Assyrian statue and a robe of a gorgeous shade of plum colour. The eldest son of the Sheikh, who was afterwards very attentive to his father's guests, wore a robe literally studded with gold embroidery and gems.

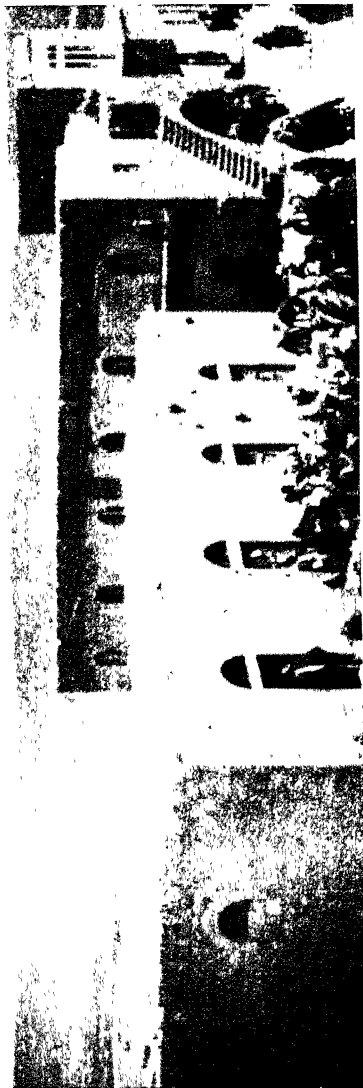
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Sir Ronald and Peake Pasha carried on a conversation in Arabic with the Sheikh and others, but the rest of us, with one exception, were dumb unless one of them acted as interpreter. The exception was that of Mrs. Vester, the head and the inspiration of the American Colony in Jerusalem, who spoke with the ease of long practice. I envied her fluency and wished more than ever that I had made better progress in my scanty Arabic studies.

During the half-hour or more that we sat here we were given Arabic coffee, unsweetened, followed by Turkish coffee sweetened; after a long interval tea was served in long glasses. Through the open door we could see preparations for lunch going forward. A coloured cloth was spread on the floor, striped towels were placed at each place to serve as napkins, plates, knives and forks—an innovation this!—were distributed, and finally a number of dishes arrived and we were summoned to the feast.

We squatted down on low cushions, Sir Ronald and Lady Storrs at the head of the table, where, after much persuasion, the Sheikh was induced to sit for a brief time. He was evidently unwilling to depart from the Arab custom of either waiting on your guests or standing by to see it done, and he soon returned to his post of observation, though not before giving a practical demonstration of the way to eat without the unnecessary knives and forks that he had so kindly provided for us.

The food was excellent and did credit to the Sheikh's staff of servants, who had sat up all night preparing for us, the telegram announcing our invasion having been only received the day before we arrived. The principal part of the menu consisted of the following



KERAK : VIEW FROM THE SHILIKH'S HOUSE

THE STONE OF THE DESERT

dishes, but there were others of the names of which I have no notes :

Lambs (whole) stuffed with rice, meat, and stone-pine kernels.

Rah-koosa, a sort of vegetable fool.

Stewed rice with cinnamon.

Baklawah, pastry containing a purée of nuts and sugar, flavoured with rosewater.

Kanafi, nut compote in pastry.

Lemman, a preparation of sour milk, resembling curds and whey.

After lunch coffee was served again in the diwan and two of the Sheikh's children came in to see us—a little boy and girl. When the father was asked how many children he had, he began to count them up, but soon owned that he did not know the number of his offspring. He was, of course, only counting up the boys, as the girls are never counted by the Arabs.

We left the hospitable house of Rufeifan Pasha el Majali when the afternoon was already advanced, and there was not too much time to see the remains of the fortifications and the castle. We walked along the walls, looked into great domed rooms, once used for storing provisions, passed along passages lit only by loopholes, and examined the ruins of the Crusaders' chapel. Here, the Sheikh's little son repeated the poem that he had recited to King Hussein when he last visited Kerak. He spoke without shyness and gave the appropriate gestures to what was a panegyric, acclaiming the King as the Saviour of his country, the King of Kings and the Kaliph of the Faithful.

Looking down over the fine views everywhere obtainable from this height, getting a glance of the Dead Sea—a pool of turquoise—and a bird's-eye view of the wide valleys, a vision of past events passed before the eyes almost involuntarily. Kerak—la Pierre du desert,

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as the Crusaders called the fortress—had stood many a siege before it at last fell to the Saracens under the young son of Salah-ed-Din, whom I confess I like better under his Westernised name of Saladin. And there is a story told by the Arab historians concerning Saladin that connects him with the story of these regions before the days of his celebrity.

Saladin, it appears, was imprisoned in Shobek, whence he was released after his uncle, a rich citizen of Damascus, had paid his ransom; before leaving he asked and obtained the honour of knighthood, which was bestowed on him by the Constable of Mont Royal. There was a good deal that was knightly about Saladin, which is shown in another story relating to a siege of Kerak. In October, 1183, he sat down before the almost impregnable fortress; soon after his arrival, Humphrey, stepson of Renaud of Chatillon, the Lord of Kerak, married Isabeau, sister of Baldwin IV., and Renaud sent his enemy a gift of meat and wine in honour of the event. Saladin accepted the offering and asked which tower the young couple were to inhabit; when he was told, he gave orders that no attack was to be made in that quarter. The exchange of civilities did not prevent Renaud from pillaging the rich caravans that passed along the immemorial route, or Saladin from departing from his usual clemency with regard to prisoners of war when he at last got Renaud into his power.

The last siege of Kerak went on for two years, and the garrison only surrendered to obtain the freedom of Humphrey, now titular Lord of Kerak; the importance of the place is shown by the orders given that all fortresses were to be dismantled except Jerusalem and Kerak, where the fortifications were much



KERAK THE RUINED FORTIFICATIONS.

THE STONE OF THE DESERT

strengthened and enlarged. One of the towers bears the name of the Sultan Beybars, who rode up, mounted on a camel, in 1293, and whose son died here while playing paume.

On the way back to Qatrani, just outside the gates of Kerak, I stopped to photograph, and had some attempt at conversation with a party of girls and women who came up with the usual friendly curiosity, ready to inspect the stranger and to be inspected. They wore the usual garb dyed in indigo, the headdress of the married women being of the coins which constitute their dowry. One of these, a young and nice-looking woman, had a great array of coins over her forehead and a veil hung down her back of coarse native cotton cloth; her dress was embroidered in coloured wool and had the very unusual device of a head on one side of her breast and a dove on the other, both in appropriate colour. As the Moslems do not allow the representation of human life as decoration, it was the more peculiar and is the only one that I saw of this type. It may have come over from Egypt in some strange way, for I seem to remember having seen something not unlike it in ancient Egyptian embroidery in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

CHAPTER X

THE DEAD SEA

ALTHOUGH the valley of Kerak leads down to the Dead Sea just north of where the "Lisan" puts out its tongue of gleaming white marl across the salt waters, it is an almost impossible journey for the ordinary traveller. The usual way to approach its rugged shores is by car from Jerusalem; at the head of the lake you can take a motor-boat for a day or more in order to explore its waters. I may say at once that the boats are dilapidated and dirty, and that it is well not to put off the expedition too long on account of the extreme heat. At the lowest level on the habitable earth, the temperature is that of a forcing house if the season be at all advanced.

It was a hot morning towards the end of April when we started on our cruise; there was a pleasant breeze as we ran along under the eastern coast and the scene was one of much interest. The water, that had appeared so superbly blue seen from a distance with the sky reflected on its surface, was now translucently green and all ruffled with rippling waves. To the west were the steep hills of Judæa, to east the long wedge of the Moab range, divided at intervals by deep chasms. Geologists tell us that the Moab hills are composed of a lower formation of Nubian sandstone which stretches as far as Petra and the Arabah, above which is the dolomite limestone capped by soft marl full of flints. The first impression of the inland sea is one of desolation. There was no animal or human life visible on these rocky shores, no sail broke the monotony of the stretch of water. No fish were to be seen in the water, no birds were flying above. The



Photo by A. Lambert, Esq

THE GATE OF THE ARNON.

THE DEAD SEA

tragedy of the ancient mariner might have developed in such a scene.

Although there is so little life about, it was not always so. In the days of the Crusaders there was a regular transport service and a ferry across from shore to shore. When Hebron was added to the fief of Kerak and the Crusaders possessed both banks, they made a regular income out of taxes levied on ships, evidence of which is given by the concessions made to certain confraternities, remitting the tax in question. In the Madeba map there are two ships depicted on the Dead Sea.

As we went on the eastern shore grew more and more striking. The bare rock was broken here and there by a creek down which a rivulet ran, making the whole fissure a mass of verdure, wild palms standing up among the undergrowth. The rocks themselves varied. There was black basalt, silver-white marl, glowing sandstone; there were picturesque boulders and bold headlands. Now and then we saw a stretch of grass land on which some sheep showed that there was life hidden among the barren and precipitous banks of the "Lake of Asphalt," as the Romans called it, or the Sea of Lot, according to the Arabs.

The Arabs take a great interest in Lot and his family misfortunes. Mohammed introduced the story into the Koran, but with a difference. An oddly shaped rock at the south end of the lake is called by them "Lot's wife"; it was said to possess strange influences and to wax and wane with the moon; another, which bears some faint resemblance to a hound looking up at its mistress, is called Lot's dog.

The history of the Dead Sea is said to begin with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and to close with

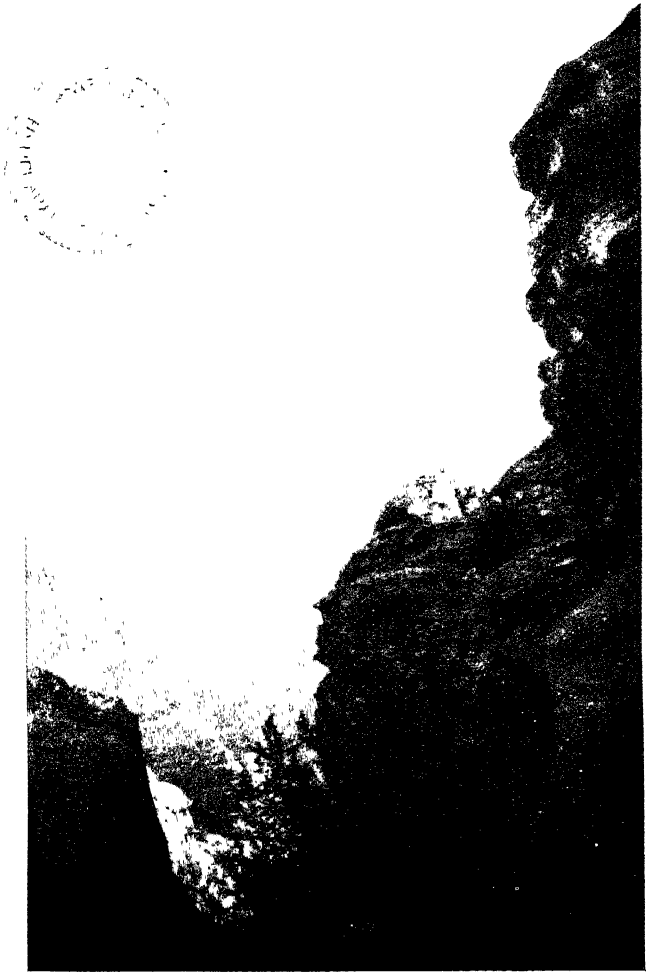
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that other tragedy, the massacre of Masada. The remains of the fort of Masada still crown the western shore at a height of 1,705 feet above the salt sea, and many interesting remains have been found there, but the undying memory is that of an heroic garrison that, to a man, committed suicide after killing the women and children so that no one should fall into the hand of the enemy. The sites of Sodom and Gomorrah, so long contested, have now been definitely determined, according to Mr. Albright, the able head of the American Archæological School in Jerusalem, who has done so much to explore east of Jordan.

Zoar, Sodom and Gomorrah are all known to be at the south end of the lake, which is also the shallow end; the site of Zoar is now placed by Mr. Albright lower down than that of the mediæval city, but on the same wadi. He pointed out to me, when I had the pleasure of meeting him in Jerusalem, that there are only three wadis in the south of the lake, and that, obviously, the cities that were engulfed must have been built in valleys where they could get water. The site of Zoar being known, it is easy to place Sodom on the nearer stream and Gomorrah on the farther.

All these sites are now submerged in the shallow water, and it will be interesting to see if any excavations can possibly be made, following up these suggestions.

Another very vitally important discovery is that of some Iron Age pottery found by the American School in this district; on further investigation it was found that what was probably a place of pilgrimage had existed here in very early days—perhaps as early as 1400 B.C. There are the remains of an altar and a shrine, and the relics found here stop at the date of the disappearance of the cities of the plain and do not



PETRA : VIEW FROM THE DEIR.

THE DEAD SEA

reappear until a thousand years later—a fact of significance enough to convince the most sceptical.

The peculiarity of the Dead Sea consists, of course, not only in its low level, but in the fact that millions of tons of water are daily poured into it which have no outlet except through evaporation. The water that pours in from the rivers is very often briny and fed with sulphurous springs, many chemicals are found in the sea-water, lumps of bitumen float on the surface after any disturbance, hot springs are said to rise up at the bottom. The shores have deposits of sulphur and petroleum, and the Jebel Usdom is itself a mass of rock salt. The waters are celebrated for their bitterness and their buoyancy, and those who are bold enough to bathe in them do well to plunge immediately into fresh water. If they do not take this precaution they will soon look like crystallised fruit and feel as stiff!

We passed along quietly, skirting the rock-bound shores that hid many places of historic interest and picturesque beauty. Up that creek is the entrance to the wonderful gorge of the Zerka, where the hot springs pour down in cascades with palm and oleander hanging over the steaming water. A few miles farther on are the hot springs of ez Zara, now supposed to be Callirrhoe, and beyond is another grand ravine near which is the site of Machaerus, where the parvenu Herod built his soul a lofty pleasure house and where Salome danced the death dance of John the Baptist lying in his prison below.

The farther south we went the brighter grew the colour of the sandstone cliffs that became, in shape and colour as well as in formation, reminiscent of Petra. After a cruise of about three hours we arrived at what appeared to be a slight creek in the mass of rock, before

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which was sandy soil where the oleander grew and some swampy ground round a sort of inlet of water. I could hardly believe that this was the famous Bab-el-Mojib—the Gate of the Arnon—about which I had heard so much, but as we got nearer the lofty cliffs reflected in the clear water and the great red pylon that guards the entrance to the narrow defile made a fine effect.

The walk up to the mouth of the river, where we meant to picnic, was made in the hottest part of the day, and when we got there it was to find that the water had risen to such an extent that it was no longer possible to walk up the bed of the river. After a bathe in the cool water, we came out to find that it was already time to start on the return voyage. It was disappointing not to be able to get farther up the river, and I would recommend anyone wishing to explore it as far as possible to make arrangements for a cruise of several days, taking camping necessities and food. An escort might also be necessary.

The Gate of the Mojib, as the Arabs call the Arnon, gives access to a narrow defile which gets grander and wilder the farther you penetrate into its interior windings. It has been compared to the Sik, but the water gives it quite a different character. It was across this ravine that Mesa boasted of having made a road, a task in which the Romans followed him. Where the modern road crosses there is a dip of nearly 2,500 feet, which will show what a fine natural northern boundary the Arnon made for Moab in days of old.

There are 225 different sorts of flowering plants round about the southern end of the Dead Sea, and other varieties to the north. Along its banks, which seemed so bare of animal life, are to be found jackals and wild boars, gazelles, hyenas, a species of wolf,



Photo by A. Lambert, Inc.

THE ARNON, FROM THE DEAD SEA

Facing page 91

THE DEAD SEA

and even leopards; while among the birds are to be seen the eagle and the vulture and many of the smaller birds, such as grouse, partridge, fantail raven, Palestine bul-bul, and one that I think is peculiar to the Dead Sea—the grackle. As to the vegetation up the valleys, it is tropical in its character and in its profusion.

It is a wonderful sight to see the sun set on the Dead Sea. It flamed down on the green waters and on the pom-poms of crystallised white foam that floated about on the surface, it brought out the colours in the Moab hills, and finally sank, a ball of fire, behind the bare Judæan hills to westward. The twilight lingered for yet a little time, and then the night fell and all the stars came out.

There is a peculiar and almost uncanny atmosphere about this region; if one knew nothing of the history, it would yet strike anyone at all sensitive to such things. It seemed almost more oppressive, in spite of the cool air of evening, after the sun set. It was as if it were charged with the weight of the past, psychically, quite as much as it was physically charged with the weight of the atmosphere, which was not like the delightful heat of a dry climate, but rather like the steamy, damp heat of a hot-house.

I do not know that I ever remember seeing the stars look finer than they did that night, even in Jerusalem, where they seem to shine with a special splendour. A planet that hung low in the velvet sky—I think that it was, most appropriately, Mars—had a regular path of light reflected in the sea. Altogether an unforgettable impression of one of the world's most curious freaks—an inland sea whose bottom is, in places, 1,300 feet lower than the surface, which is 1,290 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea.

CHAPTER XI

MADEBA

WE left Amman for Petra on Friday, March 21st; on the return journey we left Qatrani for Amman on the following Friday, the 28th. Everything had worked out "according to plan," the arrangements made for us by Peake Pasha—even including very fine weather and a full moon!—proving successful. No light task with a large party, an almost roadless country, and no available provisions except those you take with you.

There were minor drawbacks which people made the most or the least of, according to their disposition. Some complained bitterly of fleas in the cave-bedrooms of Petra; personally, I never saw one during the whole of my stay in Trans-Jordan, and had no use for the large packet of the priceless Keating that I thought it necessary to bring with me. I never saw any creatures at Petra except an occasional lizard or one of those scarabs scrambling along on its high legs, which never gives the same sensation of disgust that is experienced at the sight of a crawling beetle. My only unpleasant experience consisted in the ride from Petra, when the girth of my side-saddle was too large for the horse and it was impossible to tighten it satisfactorily. In consequence the saddle kept slipping and I with it, and I was sorry that I had been persuaded to use it instead of trying the seat astride. It is so much the fashion for women to ride astride in these days that it may seem a useless piece of advice to give, but I should certainly recommend anyone going to these countries, where not only are horses more accustomed to a man's saddle, but the men are more accustomed

MADEBA

to adjust them, to try riding astride. It is probably safer, though the side-saddle is far more comfortable, and it is not difficult to adapt oneself to the new position. Several of our party had not had much experience of riding astride, and one of them, a French lady who, by the way, was evidently a fine horsewoman, was trying it for the first time.

In spite of a phenomenally early start from Petra, we had been delayed by one thing and another that day, so much so that the last lap of the journey was accomplished in pitch darkness. It was to the credit of the chauffeurs that they found a way in that often pathless region, and we were just congratulating ourselves on approaching Qatrani when we came on the lorry stuck in the sand, which made another delay. When we at last got into the station and sought our tents we found that one of them had been commandeered by a couple who were trekking south from Amman.

The party practically broke up at Qatrani. Sir Ronald Storrs, whose wit and good humour had done much to enliven us on all occasions, was going straight to Jerusalem with his charming wife and her pretty daughter. Major Fletcher and I resolved to go a little out of the way in order to see Madeba. We went with the rest of the party as far as the station of Ziza on the Hidjaz line, where we turned off.

Had we turned in the other direction, and crossed the line to eastward, we could have easily got to M'shita, but so many people had told me that there was so little remaining of the once splendid palace, that it was useless to attempt a hasty visit. After the German Emperor managed to get the great façade with its elaborate and lace-like stone-work for his

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museum in Berlin, the Arabs took the stones to build the station at Ziza, defacing the carving to hide what they had done.

At Ziza station our chauffeur steered the car almost into a "house of hair"; pulling up suddenly, he sprang from his seat and greeted the inhabitants warmly with the usual formula just a little altered:

"We have come from Wadi Musa!"

As he seemed on the best of terms with the Bedawin, who were evidently old friends, I lost no time in following his example, taking my camera with me.

The tent was of the usual pattern, divided into three compartments, but open in front. It was made of the goat's-hair cloth which the women spin, and as one of them was busy with her spindle I may as well take a leaf from the pages of Dr. Musil's "*Arabia Petræa*" and explain how it is done.

The tribes that do not breed goats buy the goat's hair from other tribes or sometimes buy woven cloth from travelling merchants. The goats are shorn in summer and the hair is kept in sewn-up bags. The women comb this hair, beat it, and make the yarn.

A woman when spinning takes the wool under her arm, holding the wooden spindle in her left hand and twisting the thread on her right knee; the thread passes through a small ring and is wound on the head of the spindle. In weaving the thread is taken double, twined and bound to two cross pieces of the weaving stool, which are fastened in the ground about three-quarters of a yard apart. The wool is stretched across in parallel rows and afterwards woven together by means of a comb.

Besides the woman who was busy with her spindle was another who was shaking something in a sort of



AMMAN : THE THEATRE.

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cylinder. When I asked the Sheikh, who had come to meet me in the most friendly manner, what she was doing, he replied that she was making lemman. He then fetched a large earthenware saucer brimful of a milky substance, drank a sip from one side and presented me with the other. I drank and returned the saucer, feeling rather as if I were taking part in a religious ceremony, though, at first, the action of the woman had reminded me of an up-to-date waiter shaking up a cocktail. And a cocktail it proved to be, as it was the forerunner of coffee that a very old woman was even then warming up in a Damascene coffee-pot, smoking a long pipe as she did so.

It was unluckily very dark inside the tent, and the photograph did not turn out as well as it should have done; I made the attempt because the women were so natural, going on with their usual occupations, unlike so many who became at once self-conscious and usually rushed off to change their clothes when there was an idea of a photograph. I went away charmed with desert hospitality, and was grateful to little Roundhead for the introduction.

I do not know to what tribe these Bedawin belonged; whether they lived by plunder or were law-abiding. I did not realise, until I came across an article by Lord Raglan in the *Nineteenth Century*, that there are two species of these strange people—those who cultivate a patch of land and even pay some taxes, and those who live by plundering their more settled neighbours. To whichever sort they belonged, they were delightful people to meet.

Madeba is situated on a gentle hill in richly cultivated country. It is not imposing, but it is attractive, especially when you come from barren rock and long

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stretches of sand. It lies in a smiling and pleasant landscape, with cornfields in which the grain was already making a good show and there were, as usual in Palestine both east and west, quantities of wild flowers. We were met at the entrance to the town by a couple of the Arab Legion who told us that the officer to whom Peake Pasha had telegraphed announcing our visit, was away, but that we were to have lunch at the Convent attached to the Latin Church. Here we were most kindly received by the Abbé Zacharie Chomali, who gave us an excellent lunch, after which we went, escorted by our two soldiers, to see the sights.

Madeba has always been a place of importance and has prospered under many masters. It is mentioned in the Bible, Mesa tells us in the Moabite stone that he took it from Omri, King of Israel; it belonged to the Nabatæans in the time of Herod and was for long known as "the city of the Nabatæans." Under Rome it became very prosperous, and here the Greeks appear to have founded a great school of mosaics.

Madeba suffered many a siege and is said to have been destroyed by the Persians; certain it is that it was abandoned until 1880, when permission was given to the Christians of Kerak to settle here among the ruins. It is now principally a Christian village although there is also a Moslem population.

Of the old glories of Madeba little remains beyond the mosaics for which it is famous. On the crest of a hill is the Latin church known as "the Cathedral," in front of which were some interesting remains of sculptured capitals and shafts of columns; down in the depression between that spot and the hill on which is the Greek church was the old street of columns and the temple, but little of which remain. Outside

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the town, on another hillock, are two columns supporting an architrave; they are sunk deep in the ground. The capitals do not belong to the shafts, one of them being Ionic and the other Corinthian. From the appearance that it presents this fragment of a classic temple is known as "El Mashnaqa"—the Gallows.

But the chief interest to the modern traveller lies in the Greek church and in some houses where mosaic floors, dating from the fifth century A.D., are to be found. The most famous of these is the Map of Palestine, fragments of which are to be seen in the Greek church. It contains a complete map of Jerusalem which is the oldest in existence, dating from the sixth century; in this map we see the Damascus Gate with a street of columns running through the whole city, together with the walls and the towers, and the basilica over the Holy Sepulchre.

We left Madeba soon after lunch, being anxious to reach Amman in good time, but were beguiled to stop in order to investigate some Roman remains which appeared by the roadside. These turned out to be all that is left of what was once an important city, but we had little time to loiter among the wild flowers and the few upstanding ruins. A couple of Ionic columns, known as belonging to the "Little temple in the Suk," were hastily sketched and photographed before we pressed on to Amman.

The long valley in which part of Amman nestles looked beautifully green when we came up to it, and the fruit trees had burst into blossom during the week of our absence. We splashed through the shallow stream of the Zerka, rushed the steep path on the farther bank, and arrived at the door of Dr. Purnell's house Wonderful to relate, we had not had a single puncture although we had not carried a single spare tyre.

CHAPTER XII

AMMAN ONCE MORE

MISS PURNELL, the English lady doctor who has done such a great work among the women and children in Amman, lives in a bungalow overlooking the river. It was a ruined Circassian farmhouse when she repaired it in 1920 and converted it into a dwelling for herself and a friend who had taken up nursing. As this friend was away in England, she was able to take me in, and I thoroughly enjoyed the new experience and the company of a clever and entertaining woman.

The bungalow stands on a high bank and has a view of the river and the green valley of Amman, along which are gardens running down to the water; it is a quiet spot, though it runs parallel to the noisy main street. Below it are the cottages of the Circassians, and opposite is the side of the hill riddled with caves, some of which are still inhabited; on a green patch is a Bedawin tent. I used to wonder if it were there just for the time, the family wishing to have a short season in town, or whether it were a permanent feature of the scene.

The farmhouse itself always reminded me of one in an out-of-the-way part of Ireland; the effect produced by the house was carried out by the frequent appearance of the Doctor's horse tied up at the foot of the steps leading up to the door and by the affectionate greetings of two large dogs.

I tried more than once to get Miss Purnell to tell me about her work, but the conversation always branched off into another direction.

"I can't make a story of it," she said once.

Story or no story, the facts speak for themselves;

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even the few notes that I made in the interval of two hard-fought games of chess will give some idea of her activities.

In 1911 Miss Purnell started medical mission work for the C.M.S. in Gaza, being afterwards transferred to Es-Salt. She was in England when war was declared, but got back to Palestine by way of the hospitals of Alexandria and old Cairo. After serving in a hospital in Jaffa, set apart for Indian soldiers, she came over Jordan and was in Salt when it was twice taken by our troops. She was once, during the absence of the hospital personnel at Jerusalem for a conference, the only English person south of Damascus; later she was the only Englishwoman in Amman after the evacuation. She has now a dispensary in Amman, over which she was just then busy arranging a few beds in a ward to start a hospital. When I visited it there were many patients, both men and women. Her greatest triumph consists in the fact that patients of all sorts now consult her; one day she will be called to a Bedawin tent and another to the house of a rich townsman. Her success among the ladies of the harem has led to her assistance being called in frequently, and one day she took me to lunch with one of her patients.

Our hostess was the wife of one of the ministers, and the lunch was given in honour of Mrs. Philby, the wife of the British representative in Trans-Jordan, who was just preparing to leave the post, having sent in his resignation. We found about a dozen or more ladies assembled in the diwan when we arrived, only one of whom spoke French, the wife of the then Prime Minister. Notwithstanding this drawback, we managed to amuse ourselves very well. Cigarettes

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and coffee were brought and one of the guests settled down peacefully to her narghilly. When she saw that I was interested, she brought it over to me and gave me a lesson in the art. It is not easy at first to make a satisfactory bubble, as instinct or habit induces a cigarette smoker to go the wrong way to work, but with a little practice it is quite easy and rather pleasant.

We sat round the room waiting for some late arrivals in the leisurely Oriental way for some time before going into the dining-room where a long table was spread for about sixteen or eighteen guests. Our hostess followed the usual Arab custom of not sitting down with us; she stood up during the whole of the time, superintending the service. The table was arranged quite in European fashion, and there were no lambs cooked whole and stuffed with aromatic herbs; in other particulars the menu was much the same as that of our Bedawin feast at Kerak. Only, here we had many more courses. When it was over, we returned to the diwan and had more coffee and cigarettes, and a fine little baby was shown off, the son of a proud young mother who had been my neighbour at lunch.

A more intimate acquaintance with the interior of a Moslem house causes the preconceived idea of a harem to vanish. I suppose that there are harems of an exotic nature in which lovely houris flop about on silken cushions eating sweetmeats; the usual type is merely a few rooms set apart for the women and children, differing not at all from the rest of the house, except that there is a separate entrance and that men who do not belong to the family are not admitted. The women of the upper classes wear European dress, but are here, as in Western Palestine, strictly veiled

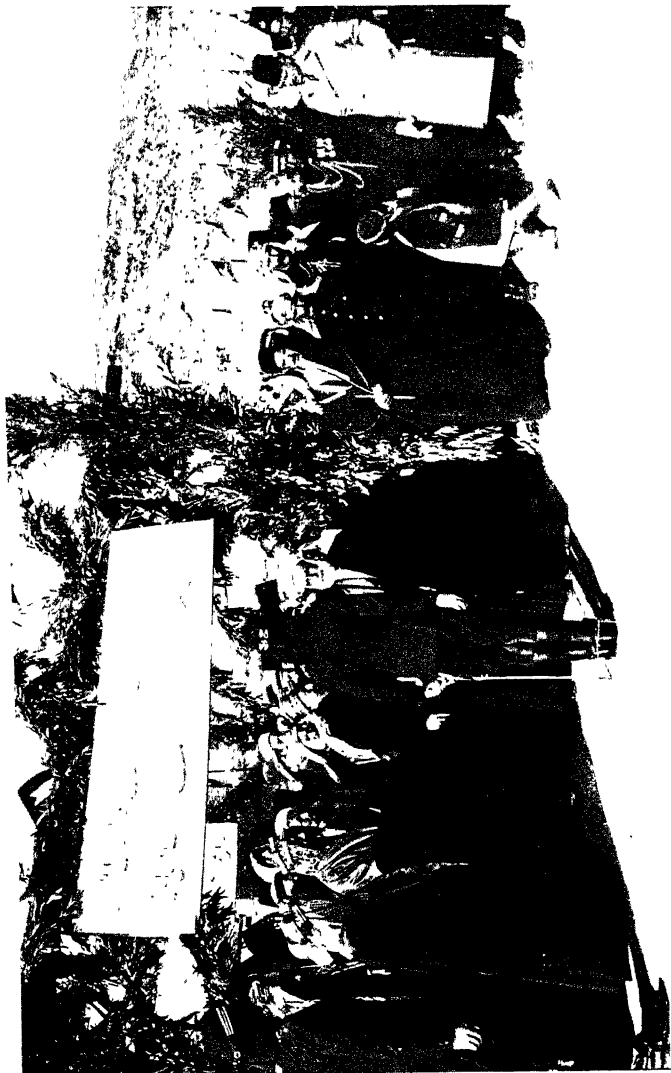


Photo by the American Colony, Jerusalem

KING HUSSEIN DECORATING PEAKE PASHA, THE COMMANDANT, ARAB LEGION, IN AMMAN.

Eastern, p. 45, 191

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out of doors. In this they differ from their Egyptian sisters, whose transparent yashmuk leaves nothing to the imagination.

The position of the women in a Moslem country depends to a great extent on the children that they bear. Daughters are not counted, except as misfortunes; in spite of this they fetch quite a good price from a prospective husband. To produce a male child is the crown of glory for a mother; failing to produce one she is liable to be divorced. So great is the joy at the birth of a son that the mother will sink her own name and be called "the mother of So-and-so," taking the name of the eldest; the father even will do the same thing, and become known as the father of his eldest son. I am speaking now of the lower classes, though the importance of having a son, and the possibility of divorce, are the same in all classes. There was an attendant at the hospital at Salt whose name was Um-Siman. I thought this an odd name, until it was explained to me that it meant "the mother of Simon"—Simon being her eldest born. At one house that I visited we were received by the first wife, who was childless, but still retained her position and was on the best terms with the second, showing a special affection to her child.

But, when all is said and done, the life of the Moslem woman is very restricted. No profession is open to her, no intellectual career can be undertaken by her. The lower classes think it a disgrace for a girl to do anything for her living; it reflects on the men, who are the only breadwinners. And yet they think it quite right for the same girl, who may not be physically strong, to carry water and wood, to work in the house, or to strike the tents, as the case may be.

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There is a small English society in Amman, consisting of the Government officials and the officers of the Air Force and their wives, of which Mrs. Philby, who was then packing up to go home, was the leading spirit. I was unlucky in again missing Mr. Philby, who was called away from Petra when we were there, and had now returned. His book on Central Arabia is well known, and all those who are interested in the country look forward to the authoritative book on Trans-Jordan, on which he has been engaged for some time, but which he has never had leisure to finish.

It is clearly impossible to get any real grip of the situation in a country that you only visit casually and with a view to recording fleeting impressions. In Trans-Jordan it is difficult to get information even as to the exact limits of the state. If the Yarmuk be considered the northern boundary, the Jordan valley and Dead Sea the western, and the Arabian desert—vaguely—the eastern, where is the southern limit? I asked an official in Jerusalem if I could include Petra in a book on Trans-Jordan; he replied that Petra was actually in the Hidjaz, but that “it was administered from Amman.” Where the boundaries of a country are so undetermined, it is no wonder that the internal conditions should present something of a puzzle to the casual onlooker. I remember once reading in a handbook on motor travel that a certain church was good for motorists; on reading farther it appeared that it could be seen well from the road, without the trouble of leaving the car. Now this newly formed state cannot be gauged, either as to its possibilities or as to its present development, in so summary a manner. That the organisation of a new system of government is no very easy task is evident.



Photo by the American Colony, Jerusalem

KING HUSSEIN INSPECTING THE ARAB LEGION AT AMMAN

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From time immemorial there have been deeply seated feuds between the Bedawin and the Fellaheen; the legacy left by ages of misrule or no-rule is one of unrest and insecurity. Every year the great predatory tribes sweep across from Central Arabia to Syria, stealing flocks and reaping harvests that they have not sown; every year the hatred that exists between them and the farmers increases. Some old sayings show the contempt that one class feels towards the other. The fellaheen say that the townsman is the Sultan of the world, the peasant is the donkey, and the Bedawy the dog of the world, because he steals for his living. The Bedawy says that the townsman is the table of the world, the peasant the donkey, and the Bedawy the Sultan. The only point on which they both agree concerns the donkey.

The Bedawy has a great contempt for people who work; the farmer has a distinct aversion for people who steal. At first these elements seem irreconcilable, but they will surely yield to better social conditions. The Bedawy will always, we hope, live in his houses of hair, removing them when the scanty pasture in the desert is not sufficient for his camels and sheep; but he can make his living honestly, as many do even now and as he would do if strong measures were in force. If the farmer felt secure, the agricultural question would present no difficulties. The present government of the Emir has apparently increased these evils by showing too much favour to the lawless part of the community at the expense of the law-abiding.

That this is one difficulty to be overcome is evident to the most casual onlooker; another is the want of money. Where does the money go? Anyone curious as to this subject can refer to the outspoken address

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delivered by Mr. Philby, after his retirement, to the Central Asian Society; it will be published by the Society in the October number of their journal.

The want of money is noticeable everywhere. The Emir, who takes an interest in education, founded a school in Salt for Moslem boys. The foundations and the ground floor have been standing some time, but it gets no farther; even the Palace outside Amman, which has a roof on, and so fares better than the school at Salt, which is roofless, is waiting for completion because there is not enough money. And yet money has been received for state purposes. Where does it go to?

Leaving aside the larger question of our broken promises to King Hussein, we may feel proud that so much has been done since Great Britain took over the Mandate. The Arab Legion organised by an Englishman, the pioneer work of our countrymen in forming a system of government and in instituting reforms and in discounting bribery, have lifted the country out of the state it was in under the Turks. There is no doubt that if a strong hand could carry out the reforms necessary, the future of the country would be assured. The terms of the Mandate seem to prevent our finishing the work so well begun; we stand in the position of advisor, an unenviable one as a rule, for it is one thing to give advice and another to find that it is carried out.

A strong man, Ali Riza Pasha, El Rikabi, once a general in the Turkish army, was just entering on the office of Prime Minister as I left Palestine. Let us hope that he will fulfil the hopes that some of those in authority seemed to centre on his administration.

AMMAN ONCE MORE

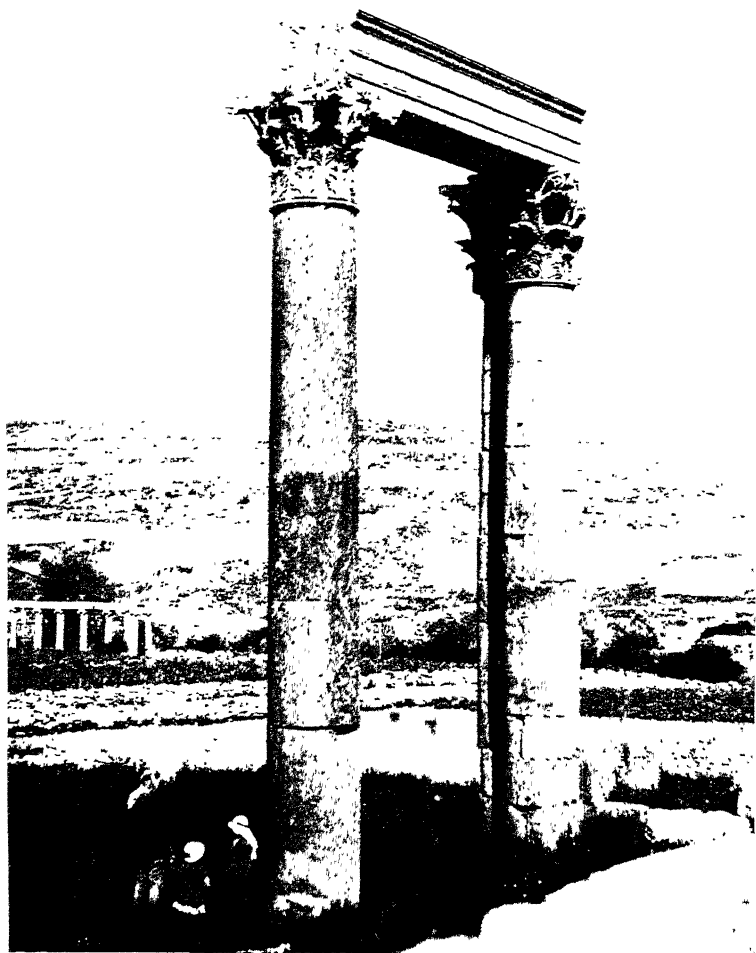
That the country, however arbitrarily formed, deserves support is certain. The Arabs are intelligent, the land only wants developing. People who speak lightly of the political importance of the Holy Land and of the lands beyond Jordan are surely very short-sighted.

CHAPTER XIII

A CITY OF THE DECAPOLIS

JERASH, the ancient Gerasa, is situated among the hills of Gilead, in the district of the Jebel Ajlun. To get there from Amman by motor you take the road to Salt as far as Suweile, and then run through cultivated land across the basin of land that lies between that village and the hills among which the Jabbok valley winds. Arriving at the river, you leave the car, to mount the horse that should be waiting for you at the opposite bank. I say "should" because, owing to a mistake of the day, the message having been received by telephone, no horse was to be seen. The car that we had hired was driven by a man who had no liking for the job; after much persuasion he was induced to drive it across the ford, and then it refused to climb the bank. After superhuman efforts it was got up a little way, but it was evident that we should never succeed in climbing the steep ascent before us, and we knew that farther on, after this new road stopped, the country was impracticable for wheeled traffic of any description.

When we were wondering what to do next, a soldier appeared and told us that horses were waiting for us higher up. It appeared that they had been waiting for us all the previous day and had only come so far on the off-chance. I was delighted to leave the car and the grumbling chauffeur, who departed saying that nothing would induce him to come back for us as arranged. This remark was only told me afterwards by a Saltese boy named Elias, whom I had brought with me in the capacity of dragoman, and I did not pay much attention to it as the man had not been paid and



JERASH : COLUMNS WITH CORINTHIAN CAPITALS.

A CITY OF THE DECAPOLIS

had even paid a deposit to ensure his fulfilling the contract.

The ride up to Jerash from the ford of the Jabbok is varied and beautiful. After leaving the grand gorge of the river the country opens out and is often cultivated, without ever losing its character of mountain scenery. The track leads up hill and down dale with scarcely a flat bit of land; the descents are often very steep, in spite of which you are mounting all the time, Jerash being over a thousand feet above the ford. It is a fertile country and well watered. You pass through expanses of corn and over mountain streams, and ride through an exceptionally fine grove of olives.

Owing to my having had to leave my heavy baggage at Salt, and to the delay at the ford, and again waiting for baggage mules when we had found the horses, it was late when we started on the ride to Jerash. It was quite dark when we arrived there, too dark to get any impression of the appearance of the place. We passed by the dark mass of the Triple gate, and our horses' hoofs clattered now and again on the basalt of the Roman pavement, and then we crossed the river and rode through the street of the modern village and into a dark yard where we dismounted.

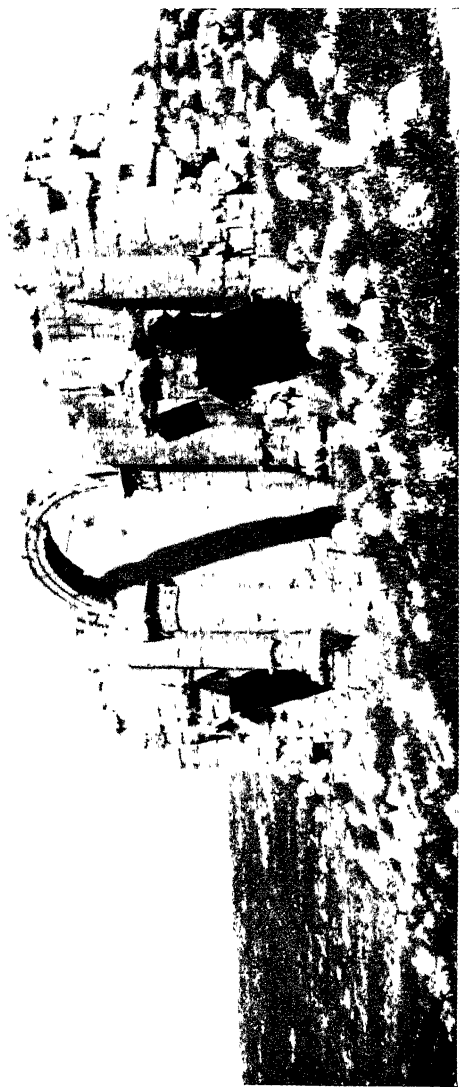
Here the escort of the Arab Legion, which had guided us so far, left us in charge of the head man of the town, who had very kindly offered hospitality. The sergeant, who had beguiled the way with ceaseless conversation—when no one else listened he seemed to talk to his horse—fired off a few parting shots about his hero, Peake Pasha. He was proud to serve under such a man, and so were they all. Was he well? He had fever at Amman? This news almost upset him when I

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had managed to convey it to him as we came along, and it furnished him with a monologue for some miles. He left us saying that he was thankful that he was better, thanks be to God ! . . . I heard him chanting as he clattered down the street.

Our host took us into a large room with whitewashed walls round which a shelf that was painted light blue was fixed; round the walls were low seats covered with clean white linen, and there were a quantity of white cushions and white hangings edged with broad white crochet. In all this whiteness a note of colour was struck by the dark velvet cushions embroidered in gold that came from Circassia and the deep red carpets from Damascus. In an alcove were the usual arrangements for bedding that are taken out at night in the East.

The first event here was a state visit from the Governor and other principal men, who came to welcome us. Luckily one of them—I think that he was the Judge, though quite a young man—spoke French, and then a sergeant came in to act as interpreter. He spoke English with a strong American accent. After they went we had excellent tea, made in a samovar, and some eggs that I had with me, and then, being fairly tired after a long day, I asked to go to the harem. I had not far to go. The yard into which the diwan opened was divided by a fence of wattle and oleander, leaving a doorway near the house across which a curtain hung. Passing through this door I found another room in which there was a large four-poster in the corner, and a mass of mattresses and quilts on the floor. Here I made acquaintance with the wife of my host, a very kind, rather sad-faced woman, whose room I shared during my three nights' stay in Jerash.



JERASH . THE BAB-EL-AMMAN FROM THE SOUTH.



JERASH · THE BAB-EL-AMMAN.

A CITY OF THE DECAPOLIS

I confess that it was not without some misgiving that I laid down among the spotlessly clean padded quilts that constitute most of the bedding in these parts, and I felt glad that I had brought my own pillow. The mattresses were placed on the floor and there was nothing to prevent an invasion of fleas or other pests, but no such invasion took place. The place was scrupulously clean, as most Circassian houses are. In the morning I ventured to ask if I could have some hot water, and was again agreeably surprised when a large round cauldron was brought which was fixed over a glowing charcoal fire. Never have I had such a hot bath! Although the sensation was rather like what St. Laurence must have felt on his gridiron before it reached boiling point, the effect was most refreshing. Anyone who has camped out in the East will appreciate the luxury of an unexpected hot bath.

That morning I went off, accompanied by Elias and the friendly sergeant with the American accent, to explore the ruins. Their great extent and the beauty of the surrounding country, seen on a perfect summer day, made one of the unforgettable visions that remain with one afterwards.

Jerash is astride a mountain stream which runs in a shallow depression, cutting the town in two parts. Parallel with the stream, as is customary in Greek or Roman cities, was the great street of columns, which was crossed by another leading up to the Temple of Artemis, formerly supposed to be a Temple of the Sun. Where these streets met was the usual Tetrapylon. Perhaps the best way to get a bird's-eye view of Jerash is to walk down the colonnade southwards to the Bab-Amman, the triumphal gate outside the

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old walls, which once encircled the city with a circumference of three miles.

The gate itself is nearly perfect, all three archways being still erect; the columns on the outer side are curious because they have broadly sculptured acanthus leaves at their base. All around are cornfields, the grain being then about a foot high and of a vivid young green, in which were poppies and other wild flowers. Beyond the fields was a valley, and beyond again nearer hills with a faint blue haze over the spring green against the more distant blue of the mountain-tops. It was a peaceful scene, suggestive of fertile country well cultivated, lying dreamily under blue skies and the faint haze of a day that promised to be very hot.

At the gate I found Major Fletcher, already hard at work on one of those masterly sketches that have been since reproduced. He worked indefatigably while we were at Jerash, often completing four sketches in a day, a high average considering the heat and the fact that all the subjects were new to him.

To the west of this gate was the Naumachia, to east the mausoleum. A little to the left, as you face the north, the remains of a temple, called by the Arabs the "Beit et-Tei," stand on an eminence; near it is one of the two theatres. The wall passed close by this temple, and the south gate, which has entirely disappeared, led directly to the oval space enclosed by columns which is supposed to have been the forum. The colonnaded road led from the forum to the north gate and along it were private and public buildings. As you look over the field of ruins now you see the columns of the portico of the Great Temple standing up on its terrace, and a quantity of columns in groups or singly spread over the vast enclosure. There were



JERASH : AT THE BAB-EL-AMMAN.

A CITY OF THE DECAPOLIS

over five hundred columns in the Colonnade; about seventy or more are still standing; the finest have Corinthian capitals. Of the semicircle of Ionic pillars still standing, and mostly still supporting an entablature, there are about fifty-six remaining. On the western bank is the chief portion of the city, but there are some fine remains of baths and other large buildings on the eastern bank where the modern village has been built.

After a picnic lunch in the precincts of the temple, came the hour of the siesta and with it stray reflections on the history of the place. These were prompted, to a great extent, by a lecture that Mr. Phythian Adams, of the British Archæological School, gave in Jerusalem. The subject was "Town Life in the Moslem East," and in it he spoke of all the different races of people who had lived there, taking the Romans and their life in one of their colonies as a type of a vanished civilization. His words did certainly help to reconstruct the life of a past age, as he endeavoured to follow in the footsteps of those Roman colonists, taking his authority from contemporary sources.

We know very little of Jerash in its early days. After Alexander the Great conquered Syria a flood of Grecian culture and Grecian fashions came over the land. The veterans of his army who settled east of Jordan, and those who came after them, are supposed to have founded the ten cities of the Decapolis, but little is known of the affair until the Romans restored their privileges, taken away by the Maccabees, and re-constituted them under their own suzerainty. These cities were bound together by the same laws, they have certain privileges in common, they were connected together by a chain of roads. Whether against

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the desert hordes or their more civilised neighbours, they were all fortified.

The most flourishing period of these Greek cities, in which the Greek gods were still worshipped, was after they became entirely Romanised. The ruins of Jerash, as we see them now, are entirely Roman, as at Amman and at most other places, Arak-el-Emir being one of the rare exceptions. A good idea of the pleasant side of town life under Roman rule is given by Libanius, writing about A.D. 360 on his natal town, Antioch. It might very well apply to Jerash, and it does help you to visualise society in the city of columns.

After describing the public buildings, the temples, the baths and the private houses of Antioch, Libanius mentions the colonnade. Why has he dwelt on this feature of the city—which, by the way, was one of the first to be erected in Syria? “Well,” he says, “it seems to me that the pleasantest, yes, and the most profitable, side of city life is society and human intercourse, and that, by Zeus ! is truly a city where these are found. It is good to talk, and better to listen, and best of all to give advice, to sympathise with one’s friends’ experiences, sharing their joys and sorrows and to get like sympathy from them—these and countless other blessings come of a man meeting his fellows. People in other cities who have no colonnades like ours stretching from before their houses, are kept apart by bad weather ; nominally they live in the same town, but in fact they are as remote from one another as if they lived in different towns. . . . They are virtually imprisoned in their homes by rain and hail and snow and wind, and only such of their slaves as have long been inured to hardships manage to run cowering to the market. . . . How different is Antioch ! . . . True,



JERASH : PART OF STREET OF COLUMNS.

A CITY OF THE DECAPOLIS

the year follows the change of the seasons, but our intercourse goes on unaltered. The rain attacks the roofs, but we, in our colonnades, walk in comfort or sit together as we will. And even those of us who live in outlying smaller streets are protected by verandahs built out from either wall and can make our way dry to the colonnade."

By the light of these words of wordly wisdom it is not difficult to people the ruined streets of Jerash with its old inhabitants gossiping together in the colonnade or worshipping "Artemis of the Gerassenes" in her temple; we can picture the quiet streets by day, when only litters or the chariot of some great official were allowed by Roman law, and the noise of wheels and the clatter of horses' hoofs by night.

Night in Antioch was, according to Libanius, rather gay. The citizens had shaken off the tyranny of sleep, the lamp of the sun was succeeded by other lamps, surpassing the illuminations of the Egyptians, and night only differed from day in the kind of lighting. Trades went on as before, some work, some play. "The night is shared by Hephæstus and Aphrodite; some work at the forge while others dance."

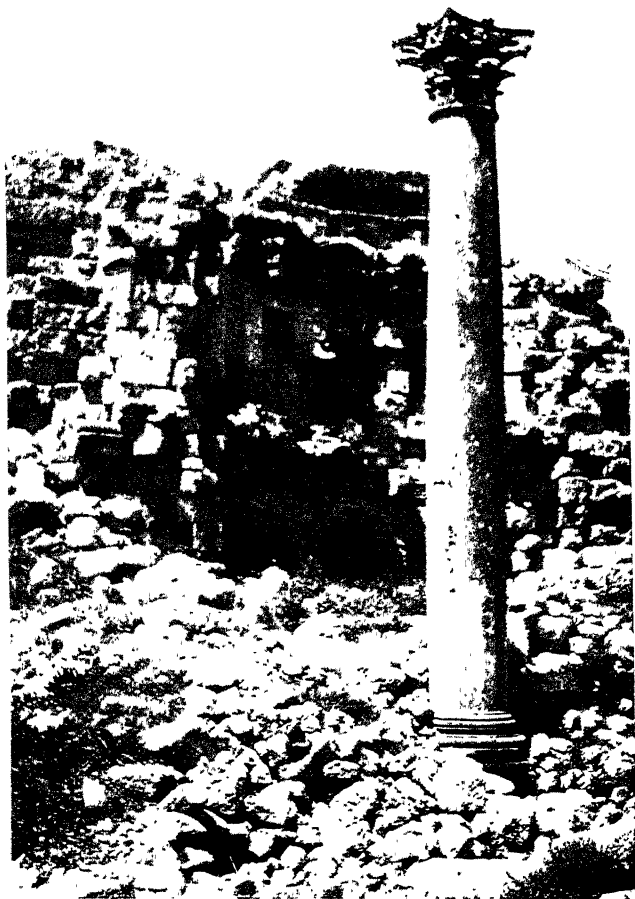
CHAPTER XIV

CIRCASSIAN HOSPITALITY

WHEN Rome fell, the cities of the Decapolis fell also, the last blow being given by the Moslem rising in the seventh century. After that date Jerash lay forgotten for over a thousand years, a prey to squatters and smugglers and occasional nomad tribes trekking from east to west and back from west to east. In 1878, the Turks allowed a party of Circassians flying from the troubles in the Russian zone to settle here, in order to cultivate the land and to act as a bulwark against the Bedawin of the desert.

The Circassians were active, hard-working people, good colonists who soon transformed the surrounding country, though they did not always act beneficially. They cut down the oaks of Gilead ruthlessly, and they blew up some of the ruins in order to get material for their houses. These people keep their native type and can never be mistaken for Arabs; they are fairer, sturdier, and the men always wear the tight fur cap that is in direct contrast to the flowing white headdress of the Arab. The two small children of my host were fairer than Arab children, the girl especially so, and I was asked if I did not think her quite like an English child.

Although the Circassians differ in character from the Arabs, they have one quality in common, and that is hospitality. The hospitality shown me by these people was unbounded. I might have stayed as long as I liked; I should have been given not only a bed but plenty of food. I knew that it would be looked on as an insult to offer money, but I got Elias to ask privately if there was anything that I could give in



JERASH: FOUNTAIN IN THE STREET OF COLUMNS.

CIRCASSIAN HOSPITALITY

return for so much kindness. The answer was that all the English were their brothers and sisters and that there was nothing that they would not do for England.

It is certain that the country is in a safer and better state under the Mandate than it was before, a fact of which we may justly be proud. Wherever I had gone in Trans-Jordan I had found soldiers of the Arab Legion on guard, and the English prestige has not suffered yet in out-of-the-way places. The English flag is still a symbol of freedom; the English are looked on as the natural protectors of small nations. In the towns they are learning to think differently, and one Arab said to me rather plaintively, after speaking of the little interest felt by us in the affairs of Palestine: "I suppose that I should be the same if I had a great property; I shouldn't think much about a little cottage."

Our Circassians gave a dinner-party in our honour to which the Governor and other worthies came. The food was prepared by the women of the family and some of their friends, assisted by the tiny Arab servant, whom I always remember as a minute shadow. Her long, dusty plaits hung far below her waist, her dusty black drapery trailed behind her; she had the eyes of an affectionate dog. The dinner was served in the harem, from which the women were, for the time, excluded; the men waiting on us. And a very excellent one it proved to be.

This party was quite a different affair to either of the others that I have mentioned; it was far more intimate. I sat next to the Governor, a very dark, dignified-looking Arab in a dark red abayah, who put more good things on my plate than I could possibly eat.

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The dinner consisted of soup, three sorts of meat, rice, lebban, and haleb, a sort of sweet milk pudding. When it was over we went into the diwan, where we were joined by various village notabilities. I had some talk with the Judge about Arabic literature and persuaded him to recite an Arabic poem. It was a love poem of the twelfth century, and it sounded so melodious that I regretted more than ever that I had not spent a year studying the language before coming into the country.

I cannot help thinking that the difficulty of learning Arabic is exaggerated by scholars. The initial difficulty is one that holds you back until the ear gets accustomed to new sounds; even then the fact that the Arabic word does not suggest its synonym in any other European tongue makes the memorising words a tedious job. Take the first words that you learn, "Yes" and "No." Why should "La" not be "Yes"? and why should "Na'am" not be "No"? "No" is the negative in English, Italian, Spanish, "Non" in French, "Nein" in German; why not "Na'am" in Arabic? But "Na'am" means "Yes" and "La" means "No." The more colloquial "Aiwa" does sound more like an affirmative. And it is the same with most words. There is no connecting link. Other difficulties there are, of course, such as broken plurals and irregular verbs, but the grammar as a whole is of crystal clarity. The writing can be taught in a simplified form, and it certainly should be studied by anyone who wants to appreciate the language.* Learning sentences in parrot fashion,

* Transliteration may be necessary, but it is often misleading and it takes away from the character of the words. One of my Arabic friends could scarcely bear to look at a page in this form. He said that it made him feel quite sick!



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as I did, has the drawback that you forget as easily as you learned; also—this is distinctly inconvenient!—having rattled off a request to be directed somewhere with a certain amount of assurance, you may—as I did more than once—be quite unable to understand the answer. With all these drawbacks a smattering of Arabic is far better than none at all. Personally I got a good deal of amusement out of mine.

I was not surprised to find that the Judge could recite poems, as he was an Arab and of the family of the Prophet. The Arabs have always loved poetry, which was, in old days, their only form of literature. For two hundred years poems were recited by regular professional reciters, and were only written down by Moslem scholars after 750 A.D. The pre-Islamic period, called by Moslems the “period of ignorance,” produced technically perfect work, showing an advanced state of culture; the Mohammedan period beginning with the Hijra, or Flight to Medina, ran through the Orthodox Caliphate, the Umayyad Dynasty, and the Abbasid Dynasty, which was the golden age of Moslem art and literature. The poems of all these periods differ very much; sometimes being inspired by the desert and sometimes by the “Sown.” Sometimes they are devoted to blood and revenge, sometimes to love; not infrequently to wine, even after it was forbidden by the Prophet. One of the most attractive of the drinking songs was written by the Court Jester of Haroun-al-Raschid, one of the boon companions of the “Thousand and One Nights.”

Abu Nuwas, who was called the Father of the Lock of Hair, was a desperate fellow, always in mischief and sometimes, after the manner of poets, in prison. His songs, as rendered in Mr. R. A. Nicholson's

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“Literary History of the Arabs,” read like one of our cavalier’s drinking songs:

Thou scolder of the grape and me,
I ne’er shall win thy smile!
Because against thee I rebel
’Tis churlish to revile.

Ah, breathe no more the name of wine
Until thou cease to blame,
For fear that thy foul tongue should smirch
Its fair and lovely name.

Come, pour it out, ye gentle boys,
A vintage ten years old,
That seems as though ’twere in the cup
A lake of liquid gold.

And when the water mingles there,
To fancy’s eyes are set
Pearls over shining pearls close strung
As in a carcanet.

So innate in the Arab is poetic imagery that even the geographers gave imaginative titles to their works. Imagine a geographer of to-day calling his latest work “The Collar of Unique Pearls,” or “Meadows of Gold” being the title of an historical dissertation beginning with the Flood and going down to the present time! Yakut, born a Greek slave and educated by his master, a merchant of Baghdad, called the epitome of his Geographical Lexicon, “The Watch Tower of Information.” And if you turn over the pages of that entertaining writer Al-Muqaddasi, who wrote towards the end of the tenth century, you will find keen comments on places that he visited in order to place them correctly on the map. Take this hit at the Dead Sea, for instance: “Now the River Jordan, descending



JERASH. THE THEATRE WITH DISTANT VIEW OF THE RUINS

CIRCISSIAN HOSPITALITY

through the valleys of the Ghaur, falls into the Overwhelming Lake (which is the Dead Sea). This lake is completely salt, all-swallowing and stinking. The mountains tower above it, but its waves never rise in the storm." Or this snapshot at Amman: "The people of the place are illiterate and the roads thither wretched. But the city is even as a harbour of the desert and a place of refuge for the Bedawin Arabs."

There is a great deal of interest in early Arabic literature even when approached through the veil of translation. Poetic imagery and shrewd humour, combined with a certain element of the primitive passions of mankind, make their writings human as well as typical of their race and the period when they were produced.

Time passed quickly in the city of a thousand columns, and it became necessary to think of leaving it only too soon. Elias declared that the cross chauffeur had no intention of meeting us at the ford of the Jabbok, as arranged; it was, therefore, no use riding down there, as there would not be any vehicle to take us on. A chance car came in the day before we were due to leave and I thought it best to engage it, as it was possible to return to Jerusalem by way of Irbid. The chauffeur, a young Circassian, had to return to Irbid that day, but he promised to come back, and we left it at that.

The day before we left was the first day of Ramadan, and our host had observed it strictly. He had passed the whole day without eating, after reciting from the Koran, which was placed in the middle of the diwan on a reading desk. When I came in, which I did rather early, having promised to photograph the family, he was poring over one of my maps. He showed it to me, appearing to be very indignant.

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"Read that!" he said, pointing to a spot in the map of Jerash.

"Kenissa," I read.

"Church, indeed!" he repeated indignantly, "it's not a church!"

He then entered into a long explanation of some grievance which appeared to be connected with Mr. Philby. What was it? "Will you come to see it?" he asked.

So we started off down the street followed by the two children, the Arab servant, and the English-speaking sergeant, who happened to stroll up as we left the house. When we arrived at the place marked "Kenissa" on the map, the cause of the grievance was made clear. My host had laid the foundations of a fine house, and the walls of the first story were already added when Mr. Philby protested. He said that there was, under this very spot, the remains of a church. As Mr. Philby was acting in the interests of the preservation of the ruins, and as he was not likely to be mistaken, there was not much to be said, but I had to sympathise with the poor man, as he had bored to a great depth without finding any trace of a ruin and had spent his money in vain. His idea was a good one, for he meant not only to build a good house for himself, but would have kept rooms specially for travellers. And that would have been a boon to those who did not want to have the trouble of camping out.

After inspecting the place we turned back and I paid a visit to the brother and his wife, whom I photographed before returning to the house to victimise the rest of the family. Not that they looked on it in that light, for they were all most anxious to be immortalised. That evening we dined with the men of the



JLRASH: NEAR THE ROMAN BATH.

CIRCASSIAN HOSPITALITY

family, who were fasting since the night before and were waited on by the children. The little girl was so small that it was not considered against etiquette for her to appear in mixed society; she carried dishes and plates with great dexterity for one so young. When her father wanted something, he called out "Garçon!" and she came trotting along. It was evidently a family joke.

That evening I went into the harem early, hoping to get to bed in good time, preparatory to an early start the next morning. But it was not to be. The friends and relations of the family, who came in every evening, sat down on the floor prepared for a good long interview. My stock of conversation was soon exhausted. I had said that I liked Jerash, that I enjoyed hot weather, that I hoped the photographs would turn out well. One question had stumped me completely. The sister-in-law, who took a great interest in clothes, asked me how many mejides my hat had cost. Although far from new, the hat had come from Reville, and the idea of reducing guineas into mejidies was too intricate for me, so I replied that I could not count in that coin, which was true enough.

For what seemed to me hours, we sat there in silence. I longed for the visitors to go that I might roll up among my quilts and go to sleep, but they seemed waiting for something. What was it? I thought at first that they were waiting for the photographs to be produced, and tried to explain that they must have patience. One lady was so insistent that I had to sit on the camera to prevent her from opening it to see for herself how her portrait had turned out. But after this point had been made clear they still sat on.

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My hostess went to sleep curled up in a chair; I kept my eyes open with difficulty. At long last one of the friends got up with a sigh and the others slowly followed her example. I felt that I had somehow failed to fulfil my duties as guest, but, to this day, I don't know in what way. All I do know is that the mistress of the house was as much relieved as I was when we were left alone. My satisfaction was complete when I heard the sound of a motor horn and knew that the car had returned from Irbid.



JERASH PART OF THE FORUM.

CHAPTER XV

JERASH TO JERUSALEM

WE left Jerash without exploring the picturesque region of the Jebel Ajlun and without penetrating into the Hauran, the region famous for being the granary of Syria, where the rich volcanic soil yields such excellent crops. A country, too, where the villages are built of black basalt, an unpromising material which the Syrian architects turned to good account. Had we pushed on to the north-east we could have visited Dera'a with its subterranean city, but that, too, had to be left to another time.

We were now in Gilead, the country that lays roughly between the Yarmuk and the Jabbok; the land of spices where the balm of Gilead was once famous. We passed through olive groves and patches of oak forest, through cornfields and rough country, up hills and down into wadis. The track was sometimes quite good, but then it had a trick, not uncommon east of Jordan, of disappearing to reappear again equally unexpectedly.

We reached Irbid about midday and stopped to take in petrol near the great reservoir outside the modern town. While the young Circassian chauffeur was looking to the car, the older man, to whom it belonged, ran into a house and brought out a rifle, which he slung on to the wind screen. There was no time to wander off to see the ruins of Arbela, on the site of which Irbid stands, and we were soon off again. The next stop, an involuntary one, was at a remote village in a desolate region, where a burst tyre was repaired. With this exception the journey was without incident. The country that we passed through was always interesting,

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whether we slithered over rocks or ran along by some dried-up watercourse. During the afternoon we came suddenly on a lovely valley, through which a stream ran bordered profusely by oleanders; a great stone castle stood on a high bank, dominating the scene. It must have been about four o'clock when we approached Amman, after running along by the Hidjaz railway for some time. We entered by the British Air Station, coming along the excellent road made by our troops.

Amman seemed like the hub of the universe after a plunge into the country. The streets were particularly animated that afternoon. Men were buying and selling or sitting gossiping at their doors; cars were worming their way through the crowd, a flock of black goats was being shepherded along by a couple of Arab boys, some Moslem women with inky black veils passed by like ghosts. And everyone talked at once.

After about half an hour's stay, rendered necessary because of a "spare part" required by the car as well as petrol, we took the road to Salt, where we arrived after a run of an hour and a quarter. Here again was plenty of animation, though of a different nature. The Saltese collected round the car to greet us in friendly fashion, for I was by this time quite well known as someone who stayed at the English hospital; most of them were also eager to greet Elias, whom we were leaving in his native place. Sister Norah was unluckily out, but the ever-ready "Mother of Simon" prepared tea in a trice. I left the saddle that had been lent me, picked up my baggage, and we were off once more.

On the road down towards Jericho we met two armoured cars in charge of a party of English Tommies; cheerful, smiling, and alert as usual. After that we



AMMAN: IN THE THEATRE.

JERASH TO JERUSALEM

had the cornice road to ourselves, as it was rapidly getting dark and it is not one that is easily negotiated after the light goes. The chauffeur was by now getting very tired and sleepy, but we whisked round hairpin turns and ran along the downward slope of the road without any mishap. As we got near the valley of the Jordan I noticed the cane shivering in the breeze, and the air lost its mountain nip and grew heavy. In the dusk we raced along the road that lies at the lowest level in the world, and arrived at the Allenby bridge over the now invisible Jordan.

We were detained some time here, but I did not feel impatient. I was sorry to leave the country that I was just beginning to know, and not very eager to return to civilisation. There is something fascinating about the unknown and the undeveloped; the door to much that was interesting in Trans-Jordan was just beginning to open. I wondered when, if ever, I should be able to visit it again and, especially, how the political situation of the new state would develop.

Men wandered about, apparently aimlessly, lamps were lit and put in place; the moment arrived at last when we were allowed to go slowly over to the other side, where the Palestine official stopped us to exchange a few civilities with the elder man, who was, I was glad to see, wide awake, while the youth nodded at the wheel.

At a sign from the guardian of the bridge he released the clutch, and we raced on down past Jericho and along the Jordan valley until we began to mount once more on the road to Jerusalem. It was the last lap of the journey.

The air freshened as we mounted up and became a strong wind on the heights. We passed Bethany,

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silent and ghostly, skirted the windy Mount of Olives, descended into the Kidron valley, passed Gethsemane, and began the stiff ascent to St. Stephen's Gate. Then the car stuck, and the chauffeur put his arms on the wheel and his head on his arms and went, comfortably and completely, to sleep.

The stars shone down on the wonderful old city, enclosed within its girdle of walls, something apart, mysterious; before us the crenellated parapet of the little sixteenth-century gate stood up against the sky. A light burned inside. In due time—hurry is of Satan, as we learn in the East—the chauffeur was awakened, the car started once more, and in a few moments it drew up before the steps of the Hospice.

The month spent beyond Jordan had left me with a mass of impressions not very easy to convey and with a quantity of negatives that might or might not turn out satisfactorily. If I have failed to present a faithful picture to those who know Trans-Jordan intimately, or to give an idea of its attractions to those who know it not, I can at least say with a Mexican poet who wrote a journey in verse, that my notes are inspired by a "sincerity that flowered in my handbag."

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